

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

NEO-PLATONIC DUALISM TO POSTMODERN
FRAGMENTATION? A NARRATIVE INQUIRY
INTO CONSTRUCTION AND EXPRESSION OF
SELF-IDENTITY IN LAY CHRISTIANS IN A
CONTEMPORARY SECULAR WORKPLACE

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requirements of Anglia Ruskin University
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*“Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work
to your praise and glory”*

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY
ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

NEO-PLATONIC DUALISM TO POSTMODERN FRAGMENTATION?
A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO CONSTRUCTION AND EXPRESSION
OF SELF-IDENTITY IN LAY CHRISTIANS IN A CONTEMPORARY
SECULAR WORKPLACE

By Diana Garfield

August 2011

This research is concerned with the construction and expression of self-identity in a sample of lay Christians working in a contemporary workplace. It seeks to understand how these believers construct and sustain, in and through autobiographical narrative, a faith-full self-identity at work. It is inspired by my own experience as a Christian believer in a secular workplace.

The results of the study contribute to the discipline of practical theology in the specific area of understanding autobiographical construction of Christian self-identity. Although the study takes an overt Christian theological stance, it draws not only from the theory of autobiographical narrative in theology, but also from corresponding theory in philosophy, sociology and psychology. In particular the research draws on the *Confessions* of St. Augustine (c AD 400), using this patristic text as a benchmark expression of Christian self-identity. Augustine's neo-platonic thinking informs the central research question which asks whether fragmentation of self-identity is experienced by Christians in the challenging environment of the present-day workplace.

Narrative is both phenomenon under study and research methodology. It is a particularly appropriate means by which to study faith identity. The concept is a fluid one and narrative inquiry is more concerned with establishing meaning and significance than facts and truth. The research resides within a constructivist paradigm and acknowledges that the findings are limited and specific.

The findings suggest that fragmentation of self-identity is experienced by the research actors in work/faith tensions. However, these believers move through a process of growing self-awareness and awareness of God's action in their lives as they construct personal work/life narratives. The research findings explore this process of self-identity construction and offer conclusions about the discovery of a sense of deep self-identity amidst the experience of fragmentation.

Key words : Practical Christian theology, workplace faith, self-identity construction, autobiographical narrative

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Neo-platonic dualism to postmodern fragmentation? A narrative inquiry into construction and expression of self-identity in lay Christians in a contemporary secular workplace

Chapter 1 Introduction

This research is concerned with the construction and expression of self-identity in a sample of lay Christians working in a contemporary workplace. It seeks to understand how these believers construct, in and through autobiographical narrative, a faith-full self-identity at work, and how they sustain that identity in the workplace environment. The results of the study contribute to the discipline of practical theology in the specific area of understanding autobiographical construction of Christian self-identity. Although the study takes an overt, Christian theological stance, it draws not only from the theory of autobiographical narrative in theology, but also from corresponding theory in philosophy, sociology and psychoanalysis in order to answer the research questions.

Within the exploration of narrative construction of self-identity this research asks whether experience of fragmentation of self-identity is evidenced in the research actors' stories, and if so, how this affects their sense of Christian self-identity. The question is asked against the background of Augustine's account in his *Confessions* of his experience of neo-platonism and its associated body/soul dualism, and his sense of deeper fragmentation of self-identity flowing from that. It is asked, too, against the background of modern and postmodern theory of self-identity construction and fragmentation in theology and the social sciences – for example - Stroup (1981), Harre (1983), McFadyen (1990), Giddens (1991), Bauman (1998), MacIntyre (2007). R S Thomas, poet-priest, also provides an insight into the contemporary experience of fragmentation of self-identity.

The Christian meta-narrative has informed and shaped Western society for almost two thousand years. Whilst the Enlightenment and modernity

have challenged the power of the church, it has only been in our own age of postmodernity that the entire meta-narrative has become seriously undermined. In the UK today Christians live in a pluralistic and secular society and in many workplaces Christian influence has become minimal. How then do a Christian minority reflect in their own life-stories their sense of belonging to the over-arching narrative of Christian history and tradition? How do they find and maintain a sense of self-identity that feels authentically Christian in the challenging environment of a contemporary workplace?

Narrative lies at the heart of this research project as both research methodology and also as phenomenon under study. The narrative methodology includes both the collection and the analysis of the data. The experiences of the research actors are collected in autobiographical narrative as the actors are asked to tell the story of their personal experience as a Christian in the workplace and recount any episodes that have been particularly important for them in that story. The stories are then analysed for evidence of self-identity construction and expression. Narrative as phenomenon under study is seen in the resulting autobiographical construction of self-identity. The practice of Christian autobiographical narrative, and the understanding of self-identity construction through it, is the field of knowledge that underpins the study and to which the results of the study contribute.

In order to root the research firmly in Christian autobiographical narrative, the contemporary stories are seen against the writings of two great Christian authors. The *Confessions*, St. Augustine of Hippo's account of his conversion to Christianity written around AD 397, can be considered on one level as Christian autobiography although on another level they are also philosophy and theology (Turner, 1995, p.51). Augustine expresses his sense of changing self-identity in his story as he interprets his own feelings in the journey towards faith. It was primarily because of Augustine's use of narrative in his *Confessions* that I chose to use his work as a foundational text. Though the *Confessions* are

written in a very different milieu to our own, they nevertheless offer a contrasting personal narrative to the research actors' stories. However, as my research progressed, my rationale for choosing Augustine - his story and his developing theology - deepened. His story reflects a radical sense of self-division and fractured self-identity which is also echoed in the stories of my research actors. Out of this sense of self-division Augustine develops a personal voice and theology which draws unity out of his fragmentation. Again I was able to find points of contact here between the Bishop's experience and that of my research actors. Finally, and most importantly perhaps, I came to see that Augustine speaks particularly to this research because he shares with my actors the experience of living in two contradictory worlds – a world of pluralism and pagan beliefs, and a world of Christian faith. Augustine stands between these two worlds and interprets their intersection in his experience and through his personal story. He brings together two cultures and two world views and combines them in his developing personal theology. My research shows the research actors involved in a similar experience and interpretative process.

Alongside Augustine, the verse of the Welsh poet-priest R S Thomas provides a more contemporary benchmark account of self-identity and faith to the stories. Thomas reminds the theologian researcher that faith phenomena are not easy to pin down. His voice speaks of undeniable faith in the face of radical doubt.

With its multi-disciplinary approach, this research represents the ability of practical theology to engage with the wider culture to inform both Christian practice and social practice. Elaine Graham writes of believers living at the threshold between the sacred and the secular and learning to share values. This way of living may –

“permit us to conceive of overlap, if not convergence, of many worldviews and value-commitments, in order that Christians can occupy the same space as others without compromising a theologically robust vision” (Graham, 2009, p. 23).

My story

The inspiration for this study arises from the researcher's own experience of being a Christian believer in her workplace. My secular role is that of a professional business librarian in a large university library. My Christian role at work is more public than that of my research actors because I am also a lay chaplain in the university chaplaincy team. The tension between my professional and my Christian roles caused me to reflect on the self-identity issues involved in holding work and faith together holistically. I had already explored ideas of lay vocation and theology of work in my MA studies and now felt that there was further work to be done in looking at issues of Christian self-identity in the workplace setting. I was increasingly aware that the voice of the lay Christian in the workplace is often unheard in both the churches and the workplace. The experience of holding together the frequently opposing worlds and values of Christian belief and workplace action remains hidden. This research therefore represents an attempt to bring into focus the experience of a small sample of lay Christians in their workplace and make their voices heard. Liberation theology affirms the value of listening to voices from the margins of institutional life in order to hear the word of God in our time and context.

“Listening to voices from the periphery makes some people in the center realize that life, spirit, vitality, soul, transformation, and meaning are much more to be found in the periphery than in the center [...] In them we hear a silent cry from God or see a sudden blossoming of life” (Van Den Dool, 2011, p.167).

I hope that this research may enable both my research actors' voices and my own voice to be heard and valued in both church and workplace. Doctoral study offers a level of reflection which should be taken seriously in both church and the academy. Being fortunate enough to work in a university I have been able to pursue my studies with support and interest both from colleagues and from chaplaincy.

University chaplaincy in a post-1992 UK university is a challenging enterprise.

“Chaplaincy’s fundamental task is to represent and reflect God’s love and presence in a secular, postmodern workplace. It is asked to respond directly to post-modernity’s challenge to there being any ‘single’ truth [...] and consequently it is forced to think ‘outside the box’ and look for spaces which might be called sacred, not in pre-ordained, religiously endowed places but in the ordinary, commonplace environment” (Moody et al, 2008, p.32).

This description of chaplaincy’s role mirrors the experience of Christian believers in the university environment. The living out of the Christian vocation in one’s workplace setting raises questions about how to represent the faith one subscribes to, how to remain open to other people’s beliefs and values whilst holding true to one’s own, how to recognise sacred moments in the humdrum, day to day experience. These are difficult questions and the temptation for people of faith is to separate their faith identity from their workplace identity in order to partially avoid them. My view is that this separation impoverishes both the life of the faith community and the life of the workplace community. Both communities have much to learn and absorb from each other and communication between the two can only exist in the lived action and thinking of individual believers. Moreover, without communication between church and world there can be no authentic, incarnational Christian witness. Christ’s presence is only found in the world where it is embodied in the lives of Christians and in the life of the church. It is a tribute to the research actors in this study that I was able to identify them as Christian believers and that they were willing to take part in the research. They had previously had the courage to put their heads above the parapet of institutional conformity and become friends of chaplaincy. Without their courage and commitment this doctoral study would not have been possible.

The institutional environment

The life of an institution such as a contemporary UK university is complex, fragmented and difficult to define. Barnett describes the postmodern context within which universities operate as one of “supercomplexity”. The framework of collegiate learning and universal knowledge within which the historic role of the university was understood, has split apart.

“We are in a situation of supercomplexity when our very frameworks for making the world intelligible are in dispute. The resulting fragility that confronts us is not that our frameworks are dissolving as such; rather, it is that for any one framework that appears to be promising, there are any number of rival frameworks which could contend against it and which could legitimately gain our allegiance” (Barnett, 2000, p. 75).

The new economic pressures within mass Higher Education and the accompanying regime of performance testing and accountability, have created an era of uncertainty about the role of universities. What is a university supposed to be like, and what is a university for? Are students learners or customers? Does a degree fit you for life or only for a job? This sense of questioning has been felt most acutely in those so-called “new” universities, set up in the UK in 1992. Formerly polytechnics and providers of vocational education, these new institutions have struggled to define their distinctive academic credentials and establish a university educational tradition of their own.

This study took place in a “new” UK university. The academic and support staff interviewed had nearly all worked within the university for a number of years. Some of them had been part of the institution as it had transformed itself from polytechnic to university. For some of them their career and life development had been closely bound up with the development of the university over many years. This sense of having been part of the ongoing story of the institution and of having been shaped, professionally and personally, by that story, is important in understanding the context of this research. My research actors show a

deep sense of belonging to the institution and of caring about its well-being. Their workplace stories are heavily influenced by the story of constant change and uncertainty that has been the institution's story in recent years. Consequently, their work/faith Christian story is also the story of their ongoing relationship with the institution. (See also Methodology chapter on Research Actors).

Martin Buber, writing in Germany in 1923, takes an extreme view of the gulf between public and private life and insists that institutions cannot create true community. He sees people living in two separate, opposing worlds – one the world of the institution, the other the world of 'I' where feelings reign.

“Institutions are ‘outside’, where all sorts of aims are pursued, where a man works, negotiates, bears influence, undertakes, concurs, organises, conducts business, officiates, preaches [...] Feelings are ‘within’, where life is lived and man recovers from institutions. Here the spectrum of emotions dances before the interested glance. [...] Here he is at home, and stretches himself out in his rocking-chair” (Buber, 1923, p.39).

Buber concludes however that true community is found neither in institutions nor in feelings, but only in living mutual relationships between human beings built, first of all, on relationship with the “living Centre” – God. He believes that people share their working lives within institutions but that sharing may only involve their self-identity at a superficial level. Deep self-identity is engaged only in living relationships. Reflecting on Buber's view of institutions and applying it to the university setting of this research, I suggest that it supports the possibility of fragmentation of self-identity for Christian believers working within the institution. Nevertheless, it seems that my research actors show a deep commitment to the well-being of the university as institution. The university may not engage them deeply as a community but, paradoxically, their shared history with the institution forms an important element in their life-story. Beck offers a possible explanation. He writes that in our fragmented postmodern society where traditional family and community structures are breaking down, institutions play a key role in

shaping people's personal biographies. The individualisation, so promoted by the advocates of consumerism, turns out to be illusory.

“The place of traditional ties and social forms (social class, nuclear family) is taken by secondary agencies and institutions, which stamp the biography of the individual and make that person dependent upon fashions, social policy, economic cycles and markets, contrary to the image of individual control which establishes itself in consciousness” (Beck, 1992, p. 131).

This research is concerned with personal biographies and the construction of self-identity seen within them. The institutional context of the research plays a key role in interpreting the research evidence.

In my title I have called the university a “contemporary secular workplace”. I am defining “secular” as meaning neutral in faith terms. The university is a pluralistic environment – religious faith is accepted but only seen as one option amongst many equal others. Taylor, in “A secular age” (2007) describes the narrative of modern secularity as being “deeply implanted in modern humanist culture”. It is a narrative constructed on the “death of God thesis”, suspicion of “primitives’ fears of the unknown”, and growing belief in “science, technology and rationality” (Taylor, 2007, pp.573-574). Such a humanist culture informs the prevailing institutional morality, alongside the pressure to create a narrative of traditional academic collegiality, and survive in a climate of managerialism. In this paradoxical environment moral narratives are mixed and confused, and this contributes to the fragmentation of the institution. The term “secular” in this work therefore denotes a neutral descriptor (as far as that is possible) in this mix of meanings.

Chapter 2

From self-identity issues in Augustine's *Confessions* to contemporary concepts of Christian self-identity: theoretical perspectives

Introduction

"Man, a little piece of your creation, desires to praise you, a human being bearing his mortality with him, carrying with him the witness of his sin and the witness that you resist the proud. Nevertheless, to praise you is the desire of man, a little piece of your creation. You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." (Augustine, Conf. 1, i)

*Where is that place apart
you summon us to? Noisily
we seek it and have no time
to stay. Stars are distant;
is it more distant still,
out in the dark in the shadow
of thought itself? No wonder
it recedes as we calculate
its proximity in light years.*

(Thomas, 2004, p. 230)

Between the lives and narratives of these two great poetic writers lie almost two millennia of Christian history. In spite of this there seems a striking similarity between the experiences described in these words. Both express something of a restlessness and longing, of a human need for peace, and a yearning for a place of wholeness and certainty. The first regrets the burden of human failings which human beings carry with them creating a barrier to faith; the second regrets the condition of a world struggling to retain faith in the face of rationalism and scientific advances. In both passages the human identity is portrayed as uncertain

and fragmented – seeking meaning. From Augustine of Hippo to R S Thomas the Christian believer inhabits a world in which many influences and pressures bear on faith-full living. This research explores how some contemporary Christians interpret and live with these tensions in their workplace setting, and how this affects their sense of self-identity.

Why Augustine's *Confessions* are important to this research

The central research question asks whether Christian believers experience a division between their faith and workplace worlds and whether their sense of self-identity consequently becomes fragmented due to the multiple, diverse demands of faith and today's workplace environment. The personal work/faith stories of the research actors are explored with this question at the heart of the analysis. Augustine of Hippo also tells a personal faith story in his *Confessions*. This narrative form of self-revelation links his story to the workplace stories told in my research. Augustine creates a religious autobiography - an account before God of his inner life of turmoil, uncertainty and self-doubt as he struggles towards Christian faith. His story seems full of a sense of inner division. Some of this division arises from his background of neo-platonic dualistic thinking about body and soul, good and evil - but some seems to arise from deeper causes which reflect more closely our contemporary experience. Augustine therefore provides a useful starting point for reflection on present-day questions about fragmentation of self-identity. The *Confessions* show Augustine recounting his progress towards Christian faith. As he looks back and remembers, he interprets his past and present feelings and aligns his experience to scripture, philosophy and the traditions of his church. How Augustine's dualistic thinking appears in this narrative unveiling, how he makes the connections between the inner life of the soul and the outer life of human beings, how he interprets his experience of fragmentation of self-identity, are themes which may resonate in the contemporary narratives of my research actors. They too interpret their experience according to their own faith and cultural understandings. Their stories also reflect their response to the varied demands of faith and workplace.

To define my terms - in this thesis I use the term “dualism” to refer firstly to the philosophical and metaphysical understandings of the ancient world, particularly in neo-platonism, but also secondly, to describe a sense of someone living in two worlds or experiencing a divide between two key narratives in their lives. In contrast, I am using the term fragmentation in connection with self-identity to describe an experience of being divided between multiple narratives. I explore this further in my section on postmodern fragmentation below.

Augustine is also important to this research because he is the first author to write consciously and in narrative about how he experiences his experience. Charles Taylor calls this -

“taking a stance of radical reflexivity or adopting the first-person standpoint” (Taylor, 1989, p. 130).

Augustine tells the story of his own inner life and records how he comes to God through a journey inwards of interpretation and self-understanding. This seems a very contemporary way of thinking to which we as twenty-first century people can relate. My research actors are familiar with the concept of reflection on one’s own experience, in for example psychotherapy, in order to make sense of life’s events. For Christians especially, the concept of a personal faith story is also familiar and narrative lies at the very heart of the Christian faith in the stories of scripture and in the Gospels. Over the Christian centuries the narrative of the Last Supper, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ has been the centrepiece around which the liturgy of the church has taken place.

Augustine’s *Confessions* not only introduce the concept of personal self-reflective Christian narrative but also the idea of finding God’s presence within us as we come to understand our own story and know ourselves. Phillip Cary notes that,

“In addition to its interest for the history of psychology, the Augustinian concept of the inner self is of great importance in theology because it allows us to conceive of the divine Other as present within the self – acting, helping, speaking, and teaching inside us” (Cary, 2008, p. vii).

In the *Confessions* Augustine argues that God's action is seen externally in the created world but that God is also to be known and met within human beings, in our soul and in our innate memory. He teaches that because we fail to truly know ourselves we therefore fail to recognise God's action and presence in our lives. This failure leaves us fragmented, pulled in many directions and yearning for peace and unity. The *Confessions* are important therefore to this research because they contribute both methodological shape and content to the project. They provide a template autobiographical narrative of self-identity disclosure, and they show a highly interpreted account of a human being moving from dualism and fragmentation of self-identity to a sense of self-unity and purpose in conversion to Christian faith.

Augustine of Hippo – a short history

Aurelius Augustine, later Bishop of Hippo in North Africa and Saint, was born in AD354 in Thagaste (now Souk Ahras, in Algeria). He was a son of the African church, an autonomous institution within the Catholic Church, intensely proud of its history and its martyrs. He was also a witness to the twilight of the Roman empire, dying at the age of seventy six in AD430 as the Vandal war-bands besieged the city of Hippo. Augustine received a classical Roman education including grammar, rhetoric and philosophy. His father was a small landowner, civil servant and a pagan, only baptised into Christianity on his death-bed. His mother, Monica, was a devout Christian who had a major influence on her son's career.

Augustine became a teacher of rhetoric and a philosopher, first in Carthage and then in Rome and Milan. For ten years, in his twenties, he was a Manichee, a member of an austere cult which taught an absolute dualism between good and evil. Manichees believed that evil, the "Kingdom of Darkness", is a hostile, external force that assails men. The "Kingdom of Light" the good and divinely inspired source of the true life of men, is held imprisoned in their souls by this evil. Thus, because evil

comes from without, followers were able to argue that there is no personal responsibility for wrong-doing and therefore no guilt. Augustine eventually became disillusioned with Manicheism, moving towards neo-platonic thinking and then on to Christian belief.

Augustine finally became a Catholic Christian in AD386 and was baptised in Milan in AD387. The *Confessions* (written between AD397-400) are his account of his early life seen from the perspective of his later Christian belief. His youthful excesses are interpreted as representative of the experience of sinful human beings distanced from their Creator by pride and self-will. His inner restlessness is seen as indicative of human beings' need to come to belief in God and obedience to God's law, in order to find inner peace and meaning. Down the centuries the church has seen the *Confessions* as a foundational text reflecting a true Christian experience of conversion, redemption and sanctification.

Augustine and neo-platonism

In Milan in AD384-386 Augustine came into contact with the works of the neo-platonists, in particular Plotinus who had taught in Rome a century earlier and died in AD270. Neo-platonism teaches a dualism between the outer, carnal world of the senses and a spiritual, inner, hidden world of perfection. Plotinus' universe has a centre, the perfect One – the source of all goodness and beauty. The average human being, living in the world, sees through the senses only a pale shadow of the perfection of creation at its source. Human desire and the physical world are not totally rejected but rather seen as prompts to awaken the human longing for God. Through the exercise of reason and self-discipline human beings can gradually ascend through the stages of an ordered universe and come closer to the One. Evil is merely a symptom of turning away from the established order in the universe, a losing of contact with the bigger picture. Cary describes neo-platonic belief thus –

“Happiness as the goal of human life, wisdom (ie. intellectual vision of the truth) as the essence of happiness, and virtue as the path to wisdom” (Cary, 2008, p. 7).

Virtue here means purification from attachment to temporal things.

Bishop Ambrose of Milan was a Christian platonist. Neo-platonism and Christianity - philosophical and scriptural understandings - came together at this period. St John's Gospel (Ch.1) speaks of Jesus as the Logos, the Word of God, coming into the world and these Christians connected Jesus with the neo-platonic One - pre-existent, perfect and eternal. Ambrose interprets the perfect world of the neo-platonists as God's kingdom from whence Jesus, as the eternal Logos comes, and to which he returns. It is the kingdom to which Christians hope to attain, through purification and control of the body, at their death. Augustine and his mother, Monica, were both deeply influenced by Ambrose, and Augustine and his close group of intellectual friends read and discussed the neo-platonists. In AD386 Augustine converted to Catholicism and in AD387 was baptised by Ambrose in Milan. He began also to read the writings of St. Paul and at first thought that they too seemed to link to neo-platonic ideas. For example in Romans Ch.12 Paul speaks of the power of the Spirit in overcoming evil, the putting on of the new man and the turning aside from fleshly concerns. This seemed to connect to neo-platonic ascetism and a dualism of soul and body.

However, later on in his career as presbyter and then Bishop of Hippo, Augustine became less enchanted with neo-platonism. His understanding of St Paul's interpretation of Spirit and Flesh deepened and changed as he recognised its insistence on the value of the human body. Paul's teaching on the constant battle of the Christian to control bodily desires and live a Spirit-led physical life is aimed, not at rejection of the body, but at saving both body and soul for bodily resurrection. Augustine increasingly realised too that the bodily incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ as Word of God did not sit easily with the belief in a perfect spiritual being, the One, of the neo-platonists. In his

later disputes with the Donatists and the Pelagians after AD400 Augustine develops a theology which accepts that neither bodily nor spiritual perfection can ever be fully achieved in this earthly life. Christians are saved through God's grace and not through their own efforts alone. Nevertheless, the dualistic essence of the neo-platonic philosophy, and the concept of the universe with the perfect One at its centre, was always deeply embedded in Augustine's thinking and continued to influence his mind during the writing of his *Confessions* around AD400. The journey inwards to true life remained for him always the essential journey of faith.

"The neo-platonists provided him with the one, essential tool for any serious autobiography: they had given him a theory of the dynamics of the soul that made sense of his experience" (Brown, 1967, p.168).

R S Thomas – poet, priest and prophet

R S Thomas (1913-2000) represents an almost contemporary voice in the discussion about self-identity in Christian believers. His later poetry deals with issues of faith in a secular age, the apparent absence of God in the world and the mystery of the self. Thomas spent his working life as an Anglican priest in the Church in Wales. He finds words which encapsulate some of the experiences and anxieties of Christians in our own time. In his autobiography "Neb" (Welsh for No-one) he writes-

"It is so easy to believe in God when you are on your knees with your eyes closed, just as it is easy to be a Christian far away from the clamour and the trials of the world of people. But the memory would come of him on his knees in the church porch as far back as Manafon (*Thomas's early parish*). He was neither inside nor outside, but on the border between the two, a ready symbol of contemporary man" (Thomas, 1997, p.78).

It is because R S Thomas is a "symbol of contemporary man" that his words are used throughout this thesis as a counter-balance to the words of Augustine, symbol of his own age.

Thomas's early poetry is concerned mainly with the natural world, and the beauty and status of Wales, but as he completes the autobiographical account of his life he admits that in the last years of his

life his poetry has centred more round ideas about the relationship between man and God. Reflecting critically on the values and priorities of contemporary Western society, he sees the relationship with God as the single most important issue in life.

“After all, there is nothing more important than the relationship between man and God. Nor anything more difficult than establishing that relationship. Who is it that ever saw God? Who ever heard Him speak? We have to live virtually the whole of our lives in the presence of an invisible and mute God. But that was never a bar to anyone seeking to come into contact with Him” (Thomas, 1997, p. 104).

Thus Thomas sums up the contemporary believer’s paradox – balancing doubt and faith in the reality of daily life, seeking to live in relationship with an unseen presence and letting that relationship shape one’s identity in the world. R S Thomas captures in his poetry something of the sense of fragmentation of self-identity that may challenge today’s Christian believers. He challenges the narrative of science as the answer to the world’s questions and problems, and finds a language of his own that holds together his radical sense of doubt with his overwhelming vocation to speak of the things of God. Thomas’s verse expresses both his theology and the essence of his own self-identity. In this way he parallels Augustine whose *Confessions* also express his sense of self and God worked out in the words of his story.

Thomas’s words remind us too that the experiences of faith can never be finally pinned down or defined. Such experiences are personal and subjective – each individual must find their own path to relationship with God.

Defining self-identity

This research explores the expression and construction of self-identity in a sample of lay Christians in a contemporary workplace and the possibility of division and fragmentation in their self-identities. Identity and self-identity are heavily used terms both in this research and in the social sciences generally, and therefore it is necessary to try to define what is meant by self-identity in this study. Brubaker and Cooper in a seminal article in 2000 discuss the over-use of the term “identity” in current social science research and question whether the word has become meaningless in many contexts. They identify five understandings of “identity” in contemporary use – two of which have relevance for this research. Firstly, understood as -

“‘self-hood’ or as a fundamental condition of social being, ‘identity’ is invoked to point to something allegedly deep, basic, abiding or foundational.”

Secondly -

“understood as the evanescent product of multiple and competing discourses, ‘identity’ is invoked to highlight the unstable, multiple, fluctuating, and fragmented nature of the contemporary ‘self’” (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, p.7-8).

These two understandings seem contradictory at first sight but it is, in a sense, the tension between the two positions that lies at the heart of this research. Self-identity here is seen both as something deep and foundational, but also something that is vulnerable to fragmentation. It is the movement between these two positions – from unity into fragmentation and from fragmentation into unity – that is the creative space wherein construction and interpretation of Christian identity in a workplace setting occurs.

Christian understandings of self-identity

Judeo-Christian tradition refers back to Genesis Chapter 1 for its foundational beliefs about human beings' true identity.

“God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27, New English Bible).

However, the story of Adam and Eve's disobedience to God's will and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3) introduces dissonance into this picture of perfect human identity. Human beings are separated from God and God-like perfection is lost.

Christian theology teaches that the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ restores the broken image of God in a perfect human being (Christ) and offers a way for Christian believers to also reflect God's image in their lives and thus their true self-identity. The Christian's new existence in Christ begins in this earthly life but finds completion in communion with God in the Kingdom of God. St Paul explores the dilemma of bodily resurrection in 1 Corinthians Chapter 15 arguing that whilst the physical body is subject to decay, the spiritual body of the believer will be raised to eternal life. The mystery of resurrection implies a change in the mode of the body enabling immortality whilst retaining the essential nature of the human being.

“What is sown in the earth as a perishable thing is raised imperishable. Sown in humiliation, it is raised in glory; sown in weakness, it is raised in power; sown as an animal body, it is raised as a spiritual body”(1 Cor. 15:42-44, New English Bible).

The animal body is thus seen as the incomplete or inferior self, the spiritual body as the true identity. Christians find their identity both in the “now” and in the “not yet”.

St Paul also explores in his Epistles a theology of Christian identity that sees the believer as “in Christ” or as living Christ's life.

“I have been crucified with Christ: the life I now live is not my life, but the life which Christ lives in me (Gal. 2:20, New English Bible).

In baptism the Christian dies to the Law and sin, and through faith and grace, becomes as Christ. The true identity of Christians is therefore Christ's identity lived in them. Again, there is a tension in this theology of perfection – can the earth-bound Christian live fully “in Christ”?

St Irenaeus of Lyons (c AD130-200), following St Paul in Romans Chapter 5, sees Jesus as a new archetype of perfect human being, replacing the old Adam. For him the human Jesus shows that God's will and human wills can find perfect union. True human identity is thus only found in sharing the life of God through conforming to Christ's way, but the Christian journey towards truth is always lived in a tension between potential and fulfilment.

“Men and women live between two poles of ‘image’ and ‘likeness’ ,call and response, opportunity and fulfilment: each human life is, therefore, a continuous story, a history, unified by its direction towards the promised communion with God for which it is created” (Williams, 1979, p. 32).

The early theologian Origen (cAD185-254) explored in Christian terms the classic Greek division between body and soul. For him the soul is the part of human beings which is akin to God and can know God. The needs of the body and the material world, in line with his platonic thought, have to be set aside in order to find salvation. So for Origen, in contrast to Irenaeus, the humanity of Jesus is less important than his role as Word and Son of God. Consequently, true Christian identity also has to be spiritual and passionless, and a body/soul dualism becomes inevitable.

Augustine in particular is concerned to explain the ramifications of Adam and Eve's sin for all humankind in his theology. In the *Confessions* Augustine illustrates his own developing theology of the Fall in his account of his personal sense of divided self-identity, interpreting this as the product of inborn sin inherited from Adam. He recounts how his true spiritual self battles with his sinful self as he struggles to make a commitment to faith.

“So I was in conflict with myself and was dissociated from myself.[...] Yet this was not a manifestation of the nature of an alien mind but the punishment suffered in my own mind. And it was not I that brought this about but sin which dwelt in me, sin resulting from the punishment of a more freely chosen sin, because I was a son of Adam” (Conf. VIII, x).

Augustine understands his divided self-identity as the product of a divided will. This topic absorbs Augustine throughout the *Confessions*. In fact, to a modern reader he seems over-aware of his own weakness of will and the human tendency to sin. His constant castigation of himself and the sense of inner conflict portrayed seem to indicate a never-ending battle with his own instincts and humanity. He is forever seeking to live beyond the limits of his physicality. In Book VII for example just before his conversion experience Augustine records finding himself enraptured by God’s beauty and perfection but unable to sustain his spiritual clarity and vision. He is hauled back to reality by physical concerns. Augustine insists that the unchangeable is better than the changeable (following neo-platonic thought) but recalls that he had not the strength of mind or body to remain fixed upon God’s beauty.

“My weakness reasserted itself, and I returned to my customary condition. I carried with me only a loving memory and a desire for that of which I had the aroma but which I had not yet the capacity to eat” (Conf. VII, xvii).

For Augustine the image of God in humankind is forever spoiled and broken by the weakness of human beings’ will and by their inborn tendency to sin against God. In the *Confessions* he tells of his own weakness and his growing dependence on God’s grace. Within his personal sense of fragmented and torn self-identity he discovers a deeper, more purposeful sense of unified self in his Christian faith.

Reformation, and in particular, Lutheran theology brings a fresh understanding of Christian self-identity. There is a return to a more direct interpretation of New Testament readings, and in Luther’s case, an adoption of the Gospel imperative –

“Anyone who wishes to be a follower of mine must leave self behind; he must take up his cross, and come with me. Whoever

cares for his own safety is lost; but if a man will let himself be lost for my sake and for the Gospel, that man is safe. What does a man gain by winning the whole world at the cost of his true self?" (Mark 8:34-37, New English Bible).

However, the re-discovered scriptural theology maintains the tension between the two understandings of self-identity – deep and abiding, and vulnerable and worldly. Faith in Christ means that a person can be justified with God in his or her soul but must still work out that justification in their body and physical life. As Christ came to serve others, so the Christian must become a servant to others and transcend self-love.

"Human beings are called, in fact, to a double act of 'self-transcending'; rising to God by faith, stooping down to the needs of others in self-forgetful love" (Williams, 1990, p. 156).

In Luther's theology the true self-identity is given graciously by God but, at the same time, only discovered and uncovered by the individual as they lose themselves in the service of others. The inner life remains the true life yet worldly life becomes the place where holiness is developed and God is served. This tension between "grace" and "works" as the way to salvation remains a question at the heart of Protestant theology. Luther and the Reformers reflect a return to Augustine's thinking on the helplessness of humankind in the face of temptation and sin, and the critical need for God's grace to achieve perfection. At the same time they insist on the need for high standards of Christian performance in the world.

Vladimir Lossky (1974), exploring divine and human identity, returns to the "image of God" doctrine continuing to link it with neo-platonic understandings. He sees human beings not simply reflecting God's image in their nature (as created beings reflecting their Creator) but more essentially showing God's image in their personhood, their individual relationship to God. Lossky insists that the more a human being allows him or herself to be penetrated by God's grace, the more he or she will become a full person and assume true self-identity.

"Man created 'in the image' is the person capable of manifesting God in the extent to which his nature allows itself to be penetrated

by deifying grace. Thus the image – which is inalienable- can become similar or dissimilar, to the extreme limits: that of union with God, when deified man shows in himself by grace what God is by nature[...];or indeed that of the extremity of falling-away which Plotinus called “the place of dissimilarity” (Lossky, 1974, p. 139).

More contemporary theological thought has seen human self-identity found most truly in relationship with God and other human beings. Zizioulas (1985) argues particularly that the doctrine of the Trinity is fundamental to Christian understandings of personhood and self-identity. He believes that because God chooses freely to exist in love within the Trinity as a relational being, so the basis of human self-identity also derives from living within loving relationships. It is only because of the development of patristic Trinitarian theology that the idea of human personhood comes into being.

“Death for a person means ceasing to love and to be loved, ceasing to be unique and unrepeatable, whereas life for the person means the survival of its hypostasis, which is affirmed and maintained by love” (Zizioulas, 1985, p. 49).

In Zizioulas’s theology the fragmented self is the unloved and unloving – the true self is found and held in loving relationship with God and other human beings.

The theology of humankind made in God’s image reaches a different conclusion in Christian humanism. Here, following the individualism of our own age, the human being is valued above all else. Wink (2002) interprets the Christian struggle to become like Christ and live in God’s image, as a commitment to risk everything to become fully human.

“We can redefine divinity, not as superhuman, posthuman, or godlike, but more fully as what we already are: human beings” (Wink, 2002, p. 259).

Our true self-identity is therefore to be found in being more human rather than in being more like God. Wink suggests that it is in the creative mess of human fragmentation that our deepest, abiding self-identity is to be found. De Gruchy agrees arguing that if the Holy Spirit enables

Christians to live “in Christ” and develop the “mind of Christ” (1Cor.2) that means that Christians are being enabled to –

“become more truly human in the image of the incarnate one. For Christians the Holy Spirit is God’s gracious presence in our lives enabling us to become more truly human, more truly ourselves” (De Gruchy, 2006, p. 196).

The goal it seems in contemporary spirituality is for human beings to be as authentically and fully themselves as possible. True self-identity is found in the fulfilment of human potential and anything that prevents that fulfilment damages self-identity.

Christian spirituality and self-identity

A person’s spirituality lies at the heart of who they are as a human being and as a Christian.

Rowan Williams defines Christian spirituality as –

“each believer making his or her own that engagement with the questioning at the heart of faith which is so evident in the classical documents of Christian belief” (Williams, 1990, p.1).

As he introduces his overview of Christian spirituality “from the New Testament to St. John of the Cross” (1990), Williams insists that spirituality is not about interpreting private spiritual experiences or concentrating solely on the interior life, but is rather about allowing our belief to question and challenge us in our daily lives.

“the greatness of the great Christian saints lies in their readiness to be questioned, judged, stripped naked and left speechless by that which lies at the centre of their faith”(Williams, 1990, p.1).

Williams includes a chapter on the spirituality of St Augustine entitled “The clamour of the heart” (p.71). Writing of Augustine’s *Confessions* he emphasises that the story is about Augustine finding himself in his search for God. The theme is “homecoming” – a return to true identity through remembered experience.

“identity is ultimately in the hand of God; but this does not mean that it is a non-temporal thing. It is to be found, and in some sense *made*, by the infinitely painstaking attention to the contingent strangeness of remembered experience in conscious reference to God” (Williams, 1990, p. 71).

Sheldrake writes that Christian spirituality –

“refers to the way our fundamental values, lifestyles, and spiritual practices reflect understandings of God, human identity, and the material world as the context for human transformation” (Sheldrake, 2010, p.5).

He argues that all Christian spirituality is ultimately rooted in scripture, in particular the Gospels, but that different traditions are interpretations of scripture in different contexts. Sheldrake particularly notes the influence of twentieth century theologians on the development of contemporary spirituality (Sheldrake, 2010, pp.63-67). Bernard Lonergan (1904-84), whose “transcendental method” placed religious experience at the heart of theological enquiry. Karl Rahner (1904-84), who also saw transcendental questions arising from daily experience and rejected any division between sacred and secular, private and public, ‘extraordinary’ and ‘ordinary’ religious experience. Protestant theologian Jurgen Moltmann, whose theology of the cross understands mystical union with Christ as preparation for action and discipleship in the world. There is thus a movement in the twentieth century towards a Christian spirituality of personal experience and radical discipleship. Out of this are born two theological movements which continue to influence contemporary spirituality – liberation and feminist theologies.

Liberation theology and its associated spirituality have particular relevance for this research, with its emphasis on hearing the stories and experience of workplace Christians who usually remain unheard. Liberation theology grew out of the experience of Christian communities living in poverty and oppression in the 1970s in Latin America. Gustavo

Gutierrez, one of its leading figures, writes of a spirituality that gives hope to the poor and marginalised.

“Given their experience of death, the poor proclaim a God who liberates and gives life. The lived experiences of God and the reflection on God that originate in the impoverished and marginalized sectors of the human race emphasize this perspective. [...] the experience of death leads to the affirmation of the God of life” (Gutierrez, 1991, p.xv).

A spirituality of liberation sees belief through the lens of the Exodus, the release of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. The liberating God longs to give his people life and identity, and calls them to act as free people within a kingdom of justice and peace. Similarly, feminist spirituality, also a product of the mid-twentieth century, seeks to re-define the reading of scripture and the use of church tradition so that the voice of the feminine, long marginalised and ignored in a patriarchal church, can be heard and celebrated. These two spiritualities of liberation offer an approach to belief that emphasises the equal value of every person and every life's experience before God.

Spirituality in the workplace

The twentieth century also saw the growth of spiritualities which are detached from any particular religion or belief system. The term “spirituality” has taken on a more open usage in the secular environment, expressing for many the search for living in more meaningful, unified and environmentally-friendly ways. Within this movement towards secular spiritualities there has been a growth of interest in spirituality in the workplace. This approach to spirituality particularly seeks to make work meaningful through emphasising the importance of values such as creativity, participation, community and the common good. Organisations and businesses are encouraged to act ethically and foster the holistic development of employees, supporting their well-being - mentally, physically and spiritually. Transformational leadership of organisations is also a major interest in this field.

In our current economic climate spirituality in the workplace is being extended to “business spirituality”. Many see a need for the Western world to move to a postcapitalist, values-driven economy if sustainable living is to be achieved. Only a change in corporate hearts could make this happen.

“Why focus on spirituality for solving the ethical deficit in business ethics? Because spirituality – as an inner experience of deep interconnectedness with all living beings – opens a space of distance from the pressures of the market and the routines of business-as-usual. This distance is a necessary condition for developing innovative ethical ideas and practices” (Bouckaert and Zsolnai, 2011, pp.4-5).

However, spirituality at work still focuses mainly on the experience of the individual and their personal response to their work. In a research project in New Zealand Marjorie Lips-Wiersma investigated whether, and if so how, spirituality influences career behaviour. She grounds the term spirituality by focussing on “meaning” – and finds in the contemporary literature on the topic that this is made up of three constructs – purpose, sense-making and coherence. Her study shows that spirituality is one of the determinants of career behaviour.

“Spirituality influences the individual’s beliefs of what are worthwhile purposes, and these purposes in turn influence career behaviour. In spite of a wide diversity of religious and spiritual beliefs, the research participants believe four purposes to be significant and meaningful: ‘developing and becoming self’, ‘unity with others’, ‘expressing self’, and ‘serving others’. Career is animated when these purposes can be expressed” (Lips-Wiersma, 2001, p.514).

Lips-Wiersma’s research appears to support the view that people of faith are likely to see their workplace role as a serious element in their self-identity. Spirituality will be a key driver in their behaviour and in their self-understanding.

Philosophical understandings of self-identity

The discipline of philosophy brings further insights to the issue of human self-identity. The awareness of the dualism of inner and outer life continues, with philosophers facing the challenge of explaining the nature of the real/eternal self. From the fifteenth century the Enlightenment view of rational thought and behaviour as humankind's highest achievement signifies in part a return to classical and Platonic or Stoic thought, and begins a move away from accepted religious understandings about the life of the soul. Descartes (1596-1650) sees the soul as the thinking self, a completely separate entity from the physical body. The mind is indivisible and eternal – the body is divisible and finite.

“[...] Sixth Meditation, he argues that the mind or soul (he does not distinguish the two terms) is not just distinct from the body, but entirely opposite in nature: the body is extended and divisible, the mind is unextended and indivisible” (Cottingham, 1996, p.146).

Thus, even though the soul and the mind are understood as one and the same thing, Cartesian thought still sees the inner self-identity as deep and abiding, and the outer, physical self-identity as fragmented and impermanent. John Locke (1632-1704) also bases his argument about the continuity of a person's sense of self-identity on inner consciousness. He believes that consciousness and in particular memory are the elements that give us our true self-identity. The physical body is a changeable part of our identity; our memories are what give us continuity of self.

“Locke's account of personal identity thus rejects 'external' (physiological or biological) tests in favour of that inner awareness each individual has of itself as a conscious being enduring through time, as a centre of self-concern” (Cottingham, 1996, p.187).

Locke's position was challenged by Joseph Butler (1692 – 1752) English theologian and moral philosopher, who maintained that memories alone cannot assure us of being the same person through time. Just because we remember an action clearly does not mean necessarily that we are the same person who performed that action in the past. Moreover, being

able to genuinely remember our past actions presupposes an ongoing self-identity as the same person rather than defines it. Butler saw self-identity as a “primitive concept”, something to be simply accepted – something defying definition. He asserted that –

“despite all the changes we go through, we are the same in the strict sense, and moreover that we have an irresistible awareness of our own identity” (Cottingham, 1996, p. 193).

Again the deepest sense of self-identity cannot be empirically pinned down – it is subjective and only known in experience.

David Hume (1711-1776) Scottish philosopher also reacted against Locke. He argued that a sense of enduring self is a kind of fiction or illusion. All we really experience is a series of perceptions following each other in quick succession. Hume insists that when we enter into ourselves we are always aware of some current perception and that we never catch ourselves without a sense of perception. For example, when we are sound asleep, we are insensible of ourselves.

“In the case of the self, Hume maintains that [...] we have a propensity to be confused, by the smooth and uninterrupted flow of distinct impressions , into running them together, and ascribing to the mind an identity which is in reality only a fictitious one” (Cottingham, 1996, p.197).

Hume’s position on the self as illusion was considered radical in his day yet it finds echoes in later existentialism and in Buddhist thought. It is close to much contemporary thinking on the constructed and fragmented self.

With the return of reason and rational thought as the highest goods for humankind, philosophers such as Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) begin to subtly rethink the nature of the inner, true life of human beings. Kant sees our rational nature as our deepest, truest human essence. Like Augustine he believes that the will of human beings has to be transformed so that they recognise this natural law within themselves. God has made us as rational agents and, as in Augustine’s theology of

two loves, human beings have to choose their motivation – the higher way of rationality or the lower way of uncontrolled human nature.

“rationality imposes obligations on us. Because we have this status which is incomparably higher than anything else in nature, we have the obligation to live up to it. [...] live up to what you really are, viz., rational agents”(Taylor, 1989, p. 365).

Kant introduces a new dualism into self-identity. The rational will to good which leads to justice, equality and reformed civilization: the irrational lower human nature which draws human beings back into superstition and immorality.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) reacts against Kantian moralism and the utilitarianism of modernist philosophy. Foreshadowing Sigmund Freud, he sees human behaviour driven by the deeper, darker unconscious forces in human existence. Kant's rational will to good is seen as surface, superficial living whilst real living is concealed beneath this, but only exceptionally strong and brave individuals can sustain true living as it requires existence beyond the accepted norms of society. Nietzsche's philosophy of hidden inner self-identity recommends that those who seek to live this true life adopt a mask in the outer world.

“A man who has depths in his shame meets his destiny and his delicate decisions upon paths which few ever reach, and with regard to the existence of which his nearest and most intimate friends may be ignorant; his mortal danger conceals itself from their eyes , and equally so his regained security. Such a hidden nature, which instinctively employs speech for silence and concealment, and is exhaustible in evasion of communication, desires and insists that a mask of himself shall occupy his place in the hearts and heads of his friends (Nietzsche, 1886, p. 29).

For Nietzsche then adopting a deliberate dualism of inner truth and outer life as mask, becomes a means of living as a unique individual in the growing conformity and uniformity of the modernist world.

In the twentieth century philosophy begins to question the role of language itself in understandings of human self-identity. Gilbert Ryle (1900-1976) writes of the Cartesian dualism of body and mind as a “dogma of the Ghost in the Machine”. He argues that the concepts of

body and mind in philosophy are simply different ways of speaking of human existence. The word 'mental' does not denote a status, and to speak of someone's mind is not to describe a repository of unseen objects but to describe a person's abilities and desires.

"It is perfectly proper to say, in one logical tone of voice, that there exist minds and to say, in another logical tone of voice, that there exist bodies. But these expressions do not indicate two different species of existence, for 'existence' is not a generic word like 'coloured' or 'sexed'. They indicate two different senses of 'exist'" (Ryle, 1949 in Cottingham, 1996, p. 181).

Particularly relevant for this research with its interest in narrative is Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) who is concerned with the relationship between the construction of language and the construction of meaning in the world. In the age of modernity philosophy begins to question the meta-narratives and the cultural assumptions of Western European society. Wittgenstein introduces the concept of 'language games' to describe the way words gain their meanings. For him words only have meaning when they are used in a certain context and setting. Thus the religious language of soul and body cannot have a fixed meaning in every circumstance.

"He views language (games) as working systems of usage or 'forms of life' , as he also often calls them, in which speakers and other participants articulate more or less recognizable linkages between words and things, drawing from well-established connections, adding their own, and coming across new ones as communication unfolds" (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000. p. 83).

Lyotard (1924-1998), inspired by Wittgenstein, sees self-identity constructed in language games as the self interprets and responds in language to events, and acts as required. The self loses any fixed structure but is endlessly present and active in interpretation.

"Lyotard views the self as a set of language games, less centered in experience than actively put to work in various ways, at specific times and places, to interpret, designate and guide our actions and related senses of our inner lives. While a grand philosophical self is diminished , but not eliminated, in usage, a practical self emerges" (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000, p. 84).

Freud and psychoanalysis

No picture of self-identity can be complete without noting the influence of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), founder of psychoanalytic treatments for mental conditions. Freud challenged the philosophers' view of the self as a conscious thinking subject with mind and body clearly delineated. He argued that much of our mental activity takes place in our unconscious minds and that this unconscious activity is the driving force in our behaviours and attitudes.

“What Freud advances is the striking proposition that the desires, attitudes and actions that make up our conscious selves are strongly influenced by unconscious mental processes – wishes, beliefs, fears and anxieties of which we are typically unaware”(Cottingham, 1996, p. 203).

Freud sought in his early work to understand the psyche through studying dreams, the unconscious activity of the mind during sleep. He identifies three elements in the human psyche – the ego, super-ego and id. The ego is the part of the self that is on show to the world, but it is extremely vulnerable because it is caught between the super-ego (Freud's definition of conscience) and the id (human instinctual drives). Freud sees the super-ego as the site of our moral values, handed down to us from our parents. He rejects the idea of a God maintaining that the concept is merely a projection of the Father figure carried over from childhood. For Freud the whole life of the psyche is built from childhood relationships and experience. Freud believes that living within the pressures of culture and civilization causes suffering to most individuals. This is because instinctual drives, particularly sexual drives, towards personal satisfaction are constantly held in check by the requirements of living in society with other human beings. Mental illness stems from this constant suppression of the id, our unconscious desires. Thus fragmentation of self-identity is a symptom of the self in conflict with itself and others. Psychoanalysis seeks to bring hidden unconscious drives to the surface so that behaviour may be understood and then modified.

Postmodern fragmentation and construction of self-identity theories

In an essay on postmodern religion Zygmunt Bauman, sociologist and philosopher, notes that the concept of identity, which he considers a contemporary construct, is an inevitable product of the breakdown of religious, political or cultural control over people's minds and lives.

“The birth of identity means that from now on it is the individual's skills, power of judgement and wisdom of choice that will decide (at least need to decide; at any rate is expected to decide) which of the infinite number of possible forms in which life can be lived become flesh” (Bauman, 1998, p.68).

Postmodern theorists argue that it is this immensity of choice that leads to a sense of fragmentation of self-identity in our own time. People in the developed Western world no longer have a sense of fixed, inherited identity from family, community or faith – but rather choose and construct their own multiple identities in response to the environments in which they find themselves. This need to choose identity and make the best of oneself leads to anxiety and inner division. According to Bauman it also leads people away from religion into the arms of secular counsellors, experts who can help them get in touch with their so-called “true selves”. Paradoxically, says Bauman in “Liquid life” (2005) it is the search for individuality and uniqueness that drives the mass-production of the consumer society. Each person is responsible for their own progress in life and this progress is measured by status and material acquisitions. There is no finishing line or final satisfaction for the consumer –

“The sole ‘identity core’ which one can be sure will emerge from the continuous change not only unscathed but probably even reinforced is that of *homo elicens* – the ‘man choosing’: a permanently impermanent self, completely incomplete, definitely indefinite – and authentically inauthentic”(Bauman, 2005, p.33).

Anthony Giddens agrees essentially with Bauman's analysis of the postmodern, or as he calls it, late modern, age. He argues that although contextual diversity may not always lead to fragmentation of self – identity -

“so far as the self is concerned, the problem of unification concerns protecting and reconstructing the narrative of self-

identity in the face of the massive intensional and extensional changes which modernity sets into being” (Giddens,1991, p.189).

Thus Giddens introduces the concept of autobiographical narrative as a key means to construct, protect and express postmodern self-identity.

Philosopher Paul Ricoeur also sees narrative as an essential element in the construction of contemporary self-identity. Ricoeur understands selfhood (*ipse*) as distinct from identity (*idem*). Selfhood -

“is characterized by its ability to reflect upon itself. Identity, on the other hand, is a narrative construction that is the product of this reflective process. Here Ricoeur plays on the double meaning of ‘identity’ as ‘self’ and ‘sameness’. Narrative identity constructs a sense of self-sameness, continuity and character in the plot of the story a person tells about him- or herself. The story becomes that person’s actual history” (Ezzy,1998, p. 245).

In “Oneself as another” (1992) Ricoeur explores a hermeneutics of the self that he claims holds -

“itself at an equal distance from the cogito exalted by Descartes and from the cogito that Nietzsche proclaimed forfeit” (Ricoeur, 1992, p.23).

He shows how Descartes’ “cogito” exalts the thinking self and the possibility of knowing truth subjectively, and how, in contrast, Nietzsche’s “anticogito” destroys the concept of a unified self by insisting that all knowledge is interpretation. Ricoeur proposes a compromise – a process by which human beings may experience some sense of personal unity within the fragmentation of postmodern life. Hermeneutics, or the ability to interpret one’s experience in an ongoing narrative, can be part of this process. But in order for hermeneutics to achieve this, Ricoeur highlights the need for trust -

“in the power to say, in the power to do, in the power to recognize oneself as a character in a narrative, in the power, finally, to respond to accusation in the form of the accusative” (Ricoeur, 1992,p.22).

Only this trust can combat suspicion and assure a person of their own self “acting and suffering” (p.22). Ricoeur seems to be arguing that in the end human beings need a sense of relationship to others through

language in order to know reality in their lives. They need to be able to construct a meaningful relational narrative of their experience, in order to feel themselves as a valid, authentic self.

Elinor Ochs, working within the discipline of linguistics, also agrees that interpretation of experience in narrative is critical to enhancing self-awareness and constructing a sense of continuity of self-identity. She identifies two forms of narrative practice. The first concentrates on creating a linear plot line and on bringing unexpected events or experiences within a constant moral stance thus helping to “reinstate a sense of stability of self” (Ochs, 2001, p.285). The second narrative practice involves the storyteller in contradicting, revising or reconfiguring their current views of themselves and the world. Such storytellers -

“are unsure of themselves, yet this ambiguity affords a heightened self-awareness that serves as a universal springboard to self-transformation” (Ochs, 201, p.285).

This second practice implies creativity arising through narrative from the experience of fragmentation of self-identity.

Calvin Schrag agrees that there is hope for creativity and the construction of a coherent sense of human self-identity even in postmodernity. He argues that this depends on human communication and the ability to create relationships. Although all the traditional fixed points of culture and knowledge have become dislodged in postmodernity, there is still the possibility of experiencing meaningful self-identity in relationship with others.

“In the aftermath of the deconstruction of traditional metaphysics and epistemology, a new self emerges, like the phoenix arising from its ashes – a praxis-oriented self defined by its communicative practices, oriented toward an understanding of itself in its discourse, its action, its being with others, and its experience of transcendence” (Schrag, 1997, p.9).

Self-making becomes a deliberately chosen activity through discourse and relationship.

Personality

The contemporary concept of personality as a way of understanding one's own identity is a further complicating factor in the picture of contemporary self-identity. In the *Confessions* Augustine writes an account of his heart and his feelings but does not talk about his personality in the modern sense of personal preferences. Augustine sees rather that he has a divided will which draws him away from the good he wishes to do. In contrast Gregory the Great (AD540-604) seems aware of different types of people with differing needs and preferences as he writes "*The Book of Pastoral Rule*" (cAD590). In his instructions to Bishops as pastors and preachers he details the variety of people and temperaments with whom they may have to deal – for example -

"The too silent, and those who spend time in much speaking. The slothful and the hasty. The meek and the passionate. The humble and the haughty. The obstinate and the fickle. The gluttonous and the abstinent. Those who mercifully give of their own, and those who would fain seize what belongs to others. Those who neither seize the things of others nor are bountiful with their own; and those who both give away the things they have, and yet cease not to seize the things of others. Those that are at variance, and those that are at peace. Lovers of strifes and peacemakers" (Schaff, c1850).

Gregory appears to have a thorough grasp of the whole range of human strengths and weaknesses. In common with the Hippocratic tradition Gregory believes that human bodies are made from four types of matter – hot, cold, moist and dry – and that these four qualities correspond to the humours of the body, affecting a person's temperament. This understanding of character and personality being controlled by the humours persisted throughout medieval times – the way to health was to balance the four humours of blood (sanguis), yellow bile (cholera), black bile (melancholia) and phlegm (phlegma) (Straw, 1988, p. 40). Gregory's *Pastoral Rule* remained for centuries the church's most influential pastoral and psychological text.

After Freud, modern psychology develops new understandings of the unconscious and hidden inner drives of human beings. Leslie Francis,

priest and psychologist, describes the concept of personality in psychology thus –

“Personality lies at the heart of who we are, or, (as theologians might want to say) at the heart of how we are made. Personality describes basic individual differences, a level of being over which we may have very little personal control” (Francis, 2005, p.7).

He sees personality differences on a par with other basic individual differences between people, like race and sex. Francis argues that whereas “character” can be changed under the influence of the Christian gospel, “personality” is fixed. If there are perceived weaknesses in personality then self-acceptance is also a gospel imperative. Francis goes on to detail sixteen personality types (based on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, 1998) and show how they may relate to the behaviour of believers, clergy and churches. However, the question of whether people have fixed personality traits creates tensions with theological understandings of human beings as ultimately transformable into the image of God. Christian doctrine teaches that belief in the death and resurrection of Christ can restore God’s image, broken through sin, in human beings. For believers the true destiny of human beings is to become like Christ.

“God’s revelation means the salvation of men, fulfilment of their destiny, of their essence” (Pannenberg, 1964, p.193).

Francis’s argument above is that God creates individuals with distinct personalities and that believers should accept the way that they are to some extent. Such thinking about fixed personality and identity, running counter to Christian doctrine on the need for human beings to seek to change in order to reflect God’s image, adds to the possibility of fragmentation of self-identity in contemporary Christian believers. The concepts of self arising from psychological understandings colour the narratives of my research actors. They see conflicts and similarities between what they understand as their personality types and Christian identity doctrines and stereotypes. They are aware of the practice in psychotherapy of telling one’s story to the counsellor in order to make sense of disturbing or upsetting experiences. The use of narrative to

explain how one's personality and one's core of being have evolved through one's experience of life is familiar to them.

"In narrative self-reflection we rehearse past events as turning points in a life-history. Only certain construals of past events cohere with present circumstances and self-understanding; but those construals, the descriptions narratively appropriate to them, can, and often do, fail to coincide with our original understanding of what had occurred" (Bernstein, 1990, p. 55).

The research actors' stories are interpretations of self-identity from the present looking back. Their stories are informed by a different framework of psychological understanding to Augustine's *Confessions* but they are constructed in a similar mental process.

Self-identity and narrative theology

An important modern study of Christian identity and narrative for this research is G.W.Stroup's "The promise of narrative theology", 1981. Stroup draws his thinking from earlier twentieth century work on the role of the biblical narrative. Karl Barth (1886-1968), disillusioned with German theological teaching in the face of the horror of the First World War (1914-18) turned to scripture and discovered afresh the "strange new world of the Bible". Barth came to believe that the Biblical narrative represents God's action in history and that the church, in re-telling the Gospel stories, reveals God's presence in the world. Christians participate in God's story as they take part in the worship and life of the church. Barth's work was developed by Hans Frei and George Lindbeck, theologians from Yale University. They argued that Christians need to inhabit the Biblical texts and know them intimately in order that they may interpret their own life in terms of the texts. Christian doctrine is not undisputed truth but rather a guide to telling the story in line with the church community's understanding.

"Lindbeck's ideas enabled Frei to see the Christian Church as a cultural community grounded upon a sacred story and generating its own language rules governing the way in which that story is told and acted upon" (Graham et al, 2005, p. 98).

Stroup's understanding of narrative theology starts from the contention that knowledge of God and knowledge of self are inextricably linked. He asserts that Christians can only be sure of their faith identity as they come to a deeper understanding of God's presence in their lives. He too uses Augustine's *Confessions* as a prime example of –

"the reconstruction of a person's self-identity in light of Christian faith and knowledge of God" (Stroup, 1981, p. 19).

The Bishop of Hippo is a perfect example of someone coming to Christian faith through being shaped by the narrative of scripture and the traditions of his contemporary church. Augustine makes an important step forward away from neo-platonic beliefs towards Christian faith as he engages with the writings of St Paul. As he reads the Epistles he writes of coming to understand the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit through

Christ. Augustine recalls reading Romans Ch. 7 which for him exactly sums up his own experience of the inner battle between will and grace.

“I discover this principle, then: that when I want to do right, only wrong is within my reach. In my inmost self I delight in the law of God, but I perceive in my outward actions a different law fighting against the law that my mind approves, and making me a prisoner under the law of sin which controls my conduct. Wretched creature that I am, who is there to rescue me from this state of death? Who but God? Thanks be to him through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7: 21-25, New English Bible).

Augustine’s pre-conversion identification with Paul provides him with a critical moment of revelation and self-discovery. His crisis of divided self-identity is resolved with his conversion in Book VIII – the result of his experience of super-natural intervention in the garden and his belief in God’s direct message to him in scripture –

“Let us behave with decency as befits the day: no revelling or drunkenness, no debauchery or vice, no quarrels or jealousies! Let Christ Jesus himself be the armour that you wear; give no more thought to satisfying the bodily appetites” (Romans 13:13-14, New English Bible).

This experience of God’s word finally brings Augustine to baptism and acceptance of the authority of the Church, and gives him the strength to face celibacy. Within the narrative of scripture and Church Augustine finds a mental balance and some unity of self-identity.

Stroup sees contemporary Western Christians in a state of crisis about their faith identity both as individuals and as church communities. He blames this on “biblical illiteracy” and the “hermeneutical gap” (Stroup, 1981, p.27) between our own time and the time of the writing of the scriptures. He also laments the ignorance in the churches about theological tradition and the lack of theological reflection amongst Christian people. Stroup sees contemporary Christians suffering from a serious lack of confidence in their faith identity and confused in their self-understanding because they are cut off from their historical, theological and scriptural roots. Stroup suggests the use of narrative as a means for re-linking Christians’ personal identity with knowledge of their traditions.

Reflecting on philosophical and anthropological studies on the relation between narrative and self-identity, he concludes that –

“personal identity is a hermeneutical concept because it is primarily an exercise in interpretation” (Stroup, 1981, p. 105).

Memory selects certain events and experiences in the life-history and uses them to interpret and make sense of the whole story. The “hermeneutical circle” proposed by Gadamer and Heidegger (Gadamer, 1989, p.269) initially for the interpretation of texts, comes into play in a personal life narrative as the parts are interpreted by the whole and the whole again by the parts of experience. Self-identity can never be static as new experience constantly changes the perspective on and interpretation of memories.

Augustine’s reflection on the power of memory also recognises that the self is formed in the depths of memory. Augustine puzzles over the relationship between memory, mind and soul in Book X of the *Confessions*. He sees the memory and mind as his inner self and a means by which he can ascend to God. Olney (1993) suggests that Augustine has two models of memory in Book X of the *Confessions*. The first is an “archaeological” model – which is fixed and static with its levels, layers and deposits which can be excavated at will. The second is a “processual” model where Augustine encounters himself and recalls himself – weaving experience into the context of the past and inferring future actions- thus shaping and re-shaping his narrative self (Olney, 1993, p.857). This second model comes close to Stroup’s interpretation of the way memory functions. He suggests that even the deepest memories are formed by upbringing, prejudices and instilled values (Stroup, 1981, p.108). The self and personal identity are not given but constructed through experience. Thus Christian identity relies on the interpretation given to one’s memories of past encounters with the faith tradition. This is a critical understanding for this research where the narratives under review are mainly memories of past experiences.

Another interpretation of narrative theology is given by Sallie McFague Teselle who develops a concept of “intermediate” or “parabolic theology” (1974, p. 631) from Christian autobiographical writing. She sees such writing following in the footsteps of Jesus’ teaching through parable and metaphor. A parabolic theology holds together belief and action – the life of the theologian becomes the place, or metaphor, within which belief is played out. McFague Teselle, following Erich Auerbach’s 1946 classic text on the representation of reality in literature, argues that the development in the West of poetry, the novel and autobiography stems from the Gospels and the story of Jesus Christ. The incarnation, God becoming man in Jesus, and the Christian faith with its assurance of God’s love for humankind, raises the importance of the individual so that each human life and story becomes a place where God’s action may be seen. Augustine’s *Confessions* are the first example of such Christian autobiographical literature. Moreover Augustine also develops a new language of his own which mixes the style of the classical world with a new interpretation and use of the Old and New Testament scriptures.

“Equally at home in the world of classical rhetoric and in that of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, he may well have been the first to become conscious of the problem of the stylistic contrast between the two worlds” (Auerbach, 1946, p.72).

The Western novel, with its focus on the destiny of individuals and their life stories, develops out of the stream of Christian autobiographical writing that follows Augustine. Early Protestantism, and in particular Calvinism, encouraged scrutiny of the inner life and spiritual introspection as a means to holiness, and seventeenth century Puritans often kept personal journals recording their spiritual progress. John Bunyan’s (1628-88) spiritual autobiography *Grace abounding to the chief of sinners* (1666) is a good example of this genre of writing. Bunyan, like Augustine, sets out to give a “relation of the merciful working of God upon my soul” (Owens, 1987, p.7) in order that others may be inspired and converted to Christ as he has been. Bunyan emphasises his poor background and lack of religious training but again, like Augustine, the scriptures become an absolutely central part of his faith after his

conversion. His autobiography gives little detail about his external life in the world and in fact is written whilst he is in prison for his non-conformist beliefs, yet it speaks an authentic language of spiritual exploration and development. Through a narrative which veers from despair over his sinfulness and lack of belief, to exaltation over his experiences of God's grace, Bunyan constructs for himself and for his readers a distinctive, authentic personal language in his confession of Christian faith. The identity that emerges is the result of an inner battle, a struggle between Bunyan's believing, faithful heart and his ever-questioning, restless, disbelieving mind. He concludes that life and faith can only be preserved through God's love and grace. His theology of grace is portrayed powerfully through his own voice and experience – an example of McFague Teselle's "parabolic theology".

Likewise *John Wesley's Journal* written between 1730 and 1790 constructs a moving theology of self-sacrifice through its continual recording of the sufferings and hardships endured by its author in his journeying around Britain. Wesley's self-identity is entirely expressed through his commitment to his Christian vocation as travelling preacher and evangelist. The scriptures permeate his writing and thinking – shaping his personal narrative and his interpretation of the world. Wesley's journal portrays an outer life completely driven by his need to respond to the call of the inner life. Rowan Williams, in a sermon on Wesley (1994), notes that Wesley's personal life was chaotic and full of mistakes and misjudgements, but in spite of this his grace-full identity shines through.

"Wesley does not expect to be able to produce order in his soul, to make a coherent identity before God. His life, his identity is in God's hands, hid with Christ. What holds him together, from moment to moment, is only the trust that his 'wholeness' is kept and formed by God. The errors, the humiliating mistakes and wrong turnings are all there, woven by God into a work of grace, a sign in the world of his victorious mercy" (Williams, 1994, p. 204).

Wesley's *Journal* is, like Augustine's *Confessions*, the account of a deep self-identity constructed solely through God's grace from vocational

certainty in the midst of personal fragmentation and restlessness. Wesley finds too an authentic voice and personal language in which to proclaim his theology through his story.

Ian Watt (1957) sees Defoe's early novel *Robinson Crusoe* as a direct descendant of these Puritan and Non-Conformist journals. The experience of the individual and the individual's personal interpretation of his or her experience, become the foundation of plot in the novel. Real life is reflected through the subjective opinion, meaning-making and expression of the novel's characters.

"The importance of this subjective and individualist spiritual pattern to Defoe's work, and to the rise of the novel, is very evident. *Robinson Crusoe* initiates that aspect of the novel's treatment of experience which rivals the confessional autobiography and outdoes other literary forms in bringing us close to the inward moral being of the individual" (Watt, 1957, p.75).

More contemporary spiritual autobiographies also follow Augustine, Bunyan, Wesley and Defoe in bringing the journey of the inward moral being to life through the personal yet authentic Christian language of their writers. Saint Therese of Lisieux's *The story of a soul* (1898) again tells little of her external life but concentrates on her inner feelings and thoughts, and her spiritual interpretation of them. The story is written in obedience to requests from senior members of her Carmelite order so that others may share her insights into the Christian life. Therese develops a personal theology called "the little way of spiritual childhood" (Beevers, 1957, p.xvi). This enables her to adopt a style of writing which seems simple and childlike. In this her own chosen voice, she speaks of her experience, describing how she overcomes temptations such as attention-seeking and self-love, through small sacrifices and service in her confined convent setting. This autobiography has become a best-seller perhaps because Therese seems such an approachable, non-threatening individual and perhaps because she tragically died at the early age of twenty four. Therese's story of her inner life teaches her theology in showing her struggle between a strong, intelligent self-will

and a desire to attain holiness through obedience and humility. The title - "Little Flower" - as she calls herself, belies a toughness and determination in the writer to achieve her goal of sainthood. Again, as with Augustine, Bunyan and Wesley, it is through God's grace and His love in Christ that Therese is enabled to reach her goal. *The story of a soul* constantly returns to the theme of the writer's love and adoration for Jesus. Her self-identity and her theology become one in her personal style of confessional devotion.

A final example of a relatively modern spiritual autobiography is C.S. Lewis's *Surprised by joy* (1955). Lewis is different from Bunyan and Therese of Lisieux in that he speaks with an academic voice and approaches the writing of his story from a more scholarly perspective. Like Augustine he begins by writing of his childhood, the death of his mother, his unhappiness at school and his gradual loss of his childhood Christian faith. The thread of spiritual awareness in the story is his recollection of moments of pure supernatural joy experienced in reading stories of heroes and in appreciation of the natural world. Lewis is like Augustine in that he argues the case with himself for and against religious belief. He tells of his youthful trust in the truth of science and his seeking of intellectual proofs for the existence of God, yet Lewis's conversion is emotional and comes in the end from a desire for true virtue. He recalls that he "was to be allowed to play at philosophy no longer" (Lewis, 1955, p. 181) – God becomes to him a living presence and soon after, Lewis accepts the truth of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and becomes a Christian. The joy that he had sensed and repeatedly sought in fiction, philosophy and in nature is seen finally as a pointer to something greater and more splendid – God himself.

"Here and here only in all time the myth must have become fact ; the Word, flesh; God, Man. This is not 'a religion', nor 'a philosophy'. It is the summing up and actuality of them all" (Lewis, 1955, p. 189).

Lewis's inner journey and transformation preserves his academic identity whilst giving meaning to the whole of his past experience and his search

after truth. In his autobiographical narrative, his developing theology and Christian confession express his own growing sense of authentic deep self-identity.

These examples of Christian autobiography and narrative theology set the scene for the exploration of my research actors' stories in this research. I have examined Christian, philosophical and psychological understandings of self-identity and shown how postmodern theories of self-identity fragmentation have emphasised the role of narrative in the construction of unified self-identity. Personal voice and story appear to lie at the heart of understanding Christian self-identity. I now introduce my conceptual framework within which I extend my theoretical perspectives and look more closely at how Augustine constructs his own sense of Christian self-identity.

Developing a conceptual framework for this research

I am using Miles and Huberman's definition of a conceptual framework –
“the current version of the researcher's map of the territory being investigated”(1994, p.20).

My conceptual framework has evolved from my reading on self-identity theory and my reflections on Augustine's *Confessions* and related Augustinian material. Bringing the ideas from the sources together has provided a framework of four key themes which seem to run through all of the literature. Each concept expresses something of the way Christian self-identity may be constructed. Underpinning these concepts is an understanding of autobiographical narrative as a means to shape self-identity.

I work from the assumption (evidenced in my reading) that there is always some measure of division or fragmentation in the Christian's perception of his or her own identity, and I have evolved a framework of themes which may arise from the state of fragmentation. First, there is interpretation of one's situation in the light of one's faith, culture and experience which may lead to the development of personal theories or theologies which make sense of the fragmentation. This interpretation may be accompanied by introspection and self-examination which increases self-knowledge and self-understanding. This introspection seems to lead to a fresh way of approaching one's world, and self-identity is re-defined in a quest for a meaningful moral framework or virtue narrative within which to live one's life. Personal action and relationship with God and other human beings within this chosen moral framework may enable living out a faith vocation and contribute to a sense of deeper, more unified self-identity.

These seem to be the themes which recur - from Augustine and the philosophers to today's sociologists, psychoanalysts and theologians. The themes cross epistemological boundaries moving between

theological, socially constructed and phenomenological knowledge. They draw the disciplines of theology, sociology and psychology together and offer a structure and framework within which I can organise my further theoretical background work as well as my analysis of my interview material. These therefore are the framework headings which I will be using to order my further reflections on my literature sources and my later interview analysis.

“Theories to unify self-identity”

“Understanding myself : the journey inwards”

“The quest for the happy (blessed) life : frameworks for living

“Encounter, call and gifting : the self in relationship”

Theories to unify self-identity

Augustine's account of his pilgrimage, as previously noted, is coloured throughout by dualistic thinking. He repeatedly speaks as if the inner and outer lives are distinct entities and his theory of neo-platonic Christianity provides a framework within which he understands both God's action and his own identity. This theory is further developed as he interprets his personal experience of belonging in two separate worlds – Christian and secular. It is particularly relevant for this research that Augustine is rooted both in the Catholic church but also in the secular society of his day. Although his context is very different from our contemporary context, nevertheless, like my research actors, he speaks of a sense of belonging in two communities. His upbringing and education mean that his self-identity is formed in relationship with both influences – he stands between his two worlds.

Whilst Augustine records in the *Confessions* his ongoing relationship with his mother's church and faith, nonetheless, he is formed partly in reaction against it, and for a long time sees the Christian faith as inadequate for his spiritual needs. Recording his first meeting with Ambrose in Milan and his impressions of Catholic teaching, Augustine admits that he had lost faith in the ability of the church to offer a convincing argument for belief. He comes to listen to Ambrose just to hear his oratorical skills.

“I began to like him, at first indeed not as a teacher of the truth, for I had absolutely no confidence in your Church, but as a human being who was kind to me. I used enthusiastically to listen to him preaching to the people, not with the intention which I ought to have had, but as if testing out his oratorical skill to see whether it merited the reputation it enjoyed” (Conf. V, xiii).

The young Augustine through his education and talents as speaker and teacher pursues his career in a different older, secular world informed by philosophy and paganism. For him the skills of oratory and rhetoric are all important. In particular the writings of Cicero had a deep influence on him. In Book III of the *Confessions* Augustine writes of the power of

Cicero's writing and a book called "The Hortensius" in which the love of Wisdom is extolled. Brown notes that for centuries philosophy had -

"been surrounded with a religious aura" (Brown, 1967, p. 40).

Augustine falls in love with the idea of Wisdom. He is fully aware of the high value and status placed upon philosophy and its exponents. He has both respect and love for the pagan texts of the classical past and they shape his self-identity perhaps even more deeply than his Catholic Christian upbringing.

Augustine's later strength as theologian and church leader stems from his ability to bring these two different worlds together so that they illuminate each other. The *Confessions* illustrate this illumination in the construction of Augustine's own self-identity. As noted previously, it is his neo-platonic philosophical understanding of the relationship between worldly reality and spiritual perfection that initially colours his self-understanding most powerfully. Augustine then brings this personal theological interpretation to his doctrinal teachings in the *Confessions*. Book XII for example transfers the ascending levels of neo-platonic attainment into a Christian creation narrative. God creates heaven and earth but has already created the "heaven of heavens" above this which is co-eternal with God and the place of his presence (Conf. XII, ix). The "heaven of heavens" is immutable and perfect – the place to which pure souls hope to ascend at death, but the way there is not simply a matter of bodily self-control and ascetic practices, as under the old platonic dispensation – the way there is also via good works and charity. Thus Augustine joins together the two threads of his formation – neo-platonism and Catholicism and creates Christian doctrine which will deeply influence the church and the development of monasticism.

"Let us break our bread to the hungry, and take into our house the homeless destitute; let us clothe the naked and not despise the domestic servants who share our human stock. As these fruits come up in the earth, see that it is good. Let our light which lasts but a short time break forth. Passing from the lower good works of the active life to the delights of contemplation, may we hold the word of life which is above and appear as lights in the world by adhering to the solid firmament of your scripture. (Conf. XIII, xviii).

In Book IV of the *Confessions* Augustine begins to work out his theology of “two loves” which relates closely to his neo-platonic understanding of the relationship between body and soul, creation and Creator. He recalls the death of a close friend, his former feelings of grief and despair, and interprets this as a revelatory moment in his spiritual progress. The narrative shows Augustine reflecting on his suffering and concluding that it is only when all created things are loved in God because they are God’s gifts, that they are loved rightly and in proportion. The Christian Augustine looks back and sees his younger self preoccupied with lovely worldly, physical things and distracted by love for them. Remembering the experience of bereavement, Augustine draws the conclusion that although human love is admirable it must always be incomplete and finite because created things are changeable and cannot offer the lasting satisfaction for the soul that God gives. In his maturing, but still neo-platonically influenced, Christian theology, the body and physical creation are not rejected but rather accepted as pointers to God’s existence. Created beauty should lead human beings to praise God.

“If physical objects give you pleasure, praise God for them and return love to their Maker lest, in the things that please you, you displease him. If souls please you, they are being loved in God; for they also are mutable and acquire stability by being established in him” (Conf. IV, xii).

In a study by Fulmer (2006) of Augustine’s theology and its relationship to contemporary consumerism there is an exploration of issues of human love and desire, and the restlessness that ensues from insatiable consumer longing. Augustine recalls himself lost to God in his youthful passions -

“tossed about and spilt, scattered and boiled dry in my fornications” (Conf. II, ii).

Similarly, Fulmer sees the victims of today’s consumerism pulled in many directions –

“Split and scattered, the self is dispersed and spread thin between all of its desires, leaving itself little strength or integrity” (Fulmer, 2006, p.121).

Fulmer argues that Augustine's theology of love, expounded through his reflections in the *Confessions* as a way of coming to love all created things in God and valuing them as God's gifts, can be an answer to contemporary consumerist fragmentation. He notes too, as I have already mentioned in my review of self-identity theory, that the human condition of fragmentation and fear is understood in theological terms by Augustine, as the result of human beings' initial fall from grace in the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The Bishop as mature theologian sees the whole of the human race infected through this original sin. Fulmer takes this Augustinian theology and interprets it, arguing that consumer desire can also be seen as a symptom of original sin.

"The soul loses its proper existence in the fall, as it is divided and, as it were, possessed by countless objects of desire, but God recreates what God has created, so that it might be good and rest in the good, as it was created to do" (Fulmer, 2006, p. 127).

For Fulmer, Augustine's theology centred on loving and desiring God before all else, offers a way through from consumerist fragmentation to unified self-identity – a theory for living.

In a contrasting secular analysis of postmodern self-identity Zygmunt Bauman agrees with Fulmer that fragmentation of identity is caused by multiple desires. Consumerism, he argues, is the new *raison d'être* for human beings in Western society, a new theory for living, replacing a Marxist understanding where wage labour and work were the central foci. Bauman highlights our desires for the status symbols of consumer goods and material wealth which become the props in our performance of our self-identity (Bauman, 1992, pp.49-50). Such an identity built on appearances, desires and possessions is intensely fragile and liable to fragmentation. Postmodern people as "pleasure-seekers" or "sensation-gatherers" are prone to "self-doubt and suspicion of inadequacy" (Bauman, 1998, p.69). In a consumer society this-worldly ecstasy replaces religious belief. For Bauman, voice of secular postmodernism, only religious fundamentalism, which offers certainty and no choices,

remains an attractive faith option for those who seek theological theories by which to live.

Augustine's theology of "two loves" – suggested in Book IV of the *Confessions* – is fully worked out in the *City of God*.

"We see then that the two cities were created by two kinds of love; the earthly city was created by self-love reaching the point of contempt for God, the Heavenly City by the love of God carried as far as contempt of self. In fact, the earthly city glories in itself, the heavenly City glories in the Lord" (*City of God*, XIV, 28).

Augustine refutes the claim by Eusebius, Constantine's biographer, that the Roman Empire is synonymous with the kingdom of God, and he rejects the current panic amongst many of his contemporaries that the fall of Rome presages the end of the world. He wants his Christian readers to take heart and maintain their faith in God. Although their earthly city, Rome, is no more, he teaches that they have an eternal, abiding city which awaits them. It is clear that for Augustine true peace and justice can only exist within the heavenly city because its citizens are ultimately concerned with loving God before all else. However, because the existence of the two cities is so intertwined during the *saeculum*, (the time between the present and God's final judgement on the world), Augustine accepts that it may be right for Christians to exercise authority in the earthly city during their lifetime and act as guardians of social harmony. Augustine insists that what is good for the earthly city may also be good for the heavenly city. Christians must respect social institutions and earthly authority because they must respect God, and because a peaceful, secure earthly society is conducive to the development of citizens of the heavenly city. (*City of God*, XIX, 26-27). Markus argues that Augustine's doctrine of secularity enables Christians to participate fully in political and social activities and exist comfortably in a pluralistic society. Whilst they may seek to do good in this life, their ultimate values will always be set by an eschatological hope.

"Christian hope, just because it is eschatological, resists the investing of immediate projects, policies and even social ideals, with any absolute character. It draws the believer into participation in political life and into full membership of his society without

tethering him to any ideology or any final political vision” (Markus, 1970, p.174).

It is the eschatological nature of Augustine’s vision of the kingdom of God that enables him to accept the imperfections in himself, the church and Roman society. Human striving after perfection is replaced by a trust in God’s grace alone to bring men and women to salvation. This enables true Christian living even within a non-Christian environment. Moreover, Augustine’s vision of the church in the saeculum as a man-made institution with imperfections creates a distinctive role for the church as ongoing sign of God’s presence in the world rather than as a completed Godly people. Markus sees the church having three roles – firstly to preach the Gospel, secondly to perform sacramental worship as an anticipatory sign of God’s kingdom, and thirdly to serve the world in God’s redeeming love. In this final ministry -

“the Church does not transform societies into the Kingdom of God – though it must support , and sometimes, inspire , creative initiatives for their transformation into better societies – but it subjects all worldly institutions as well as all programmes to a critical scrutiny in the perspective opened by the hope of that Kingdom” (Markus, 1970, p. 185-6).

The theology of an eschatological perspective allows the imperfect structures of the church as institution to offer a framework for community within which Christians may begin to develop relationships with God and each other that reflect the heavenly City’s values. Between the time recorded in the *Confessions* and the writing of *City of God*, Augustine develops his personal Christian theology from a neo-platonic dualism between inner and outer worlds to a much more sophisticated theory of “two loves” which offers meaning both in his personal sense of self-identity fragmentation under temptation, and in his corporate experience of the life and tensions within his church community.

Contemporary writers in the social sciences also support the concept of the development of a personal theory of meaning as a means to unify and create cohesive self-identity. Religious belief can act as such a theory. Behavioural scientist, Rom Harre, argues that the study of

psychology and the differences in human beings' "core of personal being" depend on the belief systems that they hold.

"The study of personal psychology becomes the study of the differential acquisition and use of belief systems in the affairs of everyday life" (Harre, 1983, p. 200).

Harre believes that persons are defined not by their experience or their genetic make-up, but by their beliefs. For someone to have a sense of personal identity it is necessary that they are self-conscious and aware of their experience constituting a personal unity, and that their present actions are located in an autobiographical narrative. Harre argues that personal identity has the status of a theory to the individual.

"Self-knowledge arises through involvement in our actions, as those are engaged with others. [...] our beliefs about ourselves, unless set against a thorough investigation of the normative system within which they are to be realized, miss the core of personal being" (Harre, 1983, p. 261).

Our belief systems shape us and give us a sense of meaning in our lives which allows us to construct secure self-identity. Giddens writes that the interconnecting thread of a human life is the internal line of development of the self. However, this for him is only "internally referential" (1991, p.80) in late modernity – the personal narrative of self-development aims at the achievement of integrity in an authentic self but the markers for this journey are all set by the individual in-

"the creation of a personal belief system by means of which the individual acknowledges that 'his first loyalty is to himself.' The key reference points are set 'from the inside', in terms of how the individual constructs/reconstructs his life history" (Giddens, 1991, p. 80).

Giddens suggests here, in an echo of Augustine's critique of his own society, that most contemporary personal belief systems revolve around loyalty to self rather than to God.

R S Thomas reflects bleakly that in this postmodern world we all prefer to select our own theories of belief and our own theologies, and shape ourselves accordingly. Are we all therefore “heretics”?

Heretics

*All congregate;
all murmur an Amen
to the prayers. The preacher
deviates within narrowing
parameters. They were born
in sight of the one church;
they have to lie in its shadow.
Man has to believe
something. May as well invest
in this creed as in that.
Parthenogenesis! the door was flung
open to proliferation:
Nicaea, Chalcedon. The divine
blood dried in the libraries;
but the pages fornicated
with the contradictory words.
The preacher scales unbelievable
heights by the bones of the martyrs.
What would his listeners
die for? Are they selective
like me, knowing that among
a myriad disciplines each one
has its orthodoxy from which
the words flow? Alas, we are heretics
all, and the one we subscribe to
is not love any more than the kingdom
for the sake of which we are
fools is the kingdom of heaven.*

(Thomas, 2004, p. 233)

Understanding myself : the journey inwards

The story of the *Confessions* is Augustine's personal account of his journey to Christian faith, written some eleven years after his conversion and baptism. The story records Augustine's interpretation of his journey inwards, towards greater self-knowledge, soul-knowledge and God-knowledge. The Bishop of Hippo recognises throughout that this journey is fraught with danger and difficulty, because the human being and the human heart are complex, duplicitous entities.

“Man is a vast deep, whose hairs you, Lord, have numbered, and in you none can be lost. Yet it is easier to count his hairs than the passions and emotions of his heart” (Conf. IV,xiv).

It is the painfully honest recording of the guilt, passions and emotions of the man Augustine which make the *Confessions* a living, compelling narrative even in our own time. He takes the classical philosophical understanding of virtue as

“passionless observance of rational desire in the face of impulses provoked by external circumstances”(Hundert, 1992, p.88)

and completely reconceptualises it through telling his own passionate and emotional story of seeking God and truth through inner conflict and division.

Even in Book 1 of his autobiography Augustine is clear that it is the condition of the soul, the inner life, the heart of a man- that is most critical in God's eyes. The soul is seen as the place for God within human beings - a private, inner world affected by the desires and sins of the body and yet in some sense, separate from the body.

“The house of my soul is too small for you to come to it. May it be enlarged by you. It is in ruins: restore it. In your eyes it has offensive features. I admit it, I know it; but who will clean it up?”(Conf. I, v).

Augustine turns inward to escape his restlessness and find his true self with God as his guide. As noted above however, it is not expected to be an easy journey. Cavadini argues that any conception of the true self as a stable, interior reality does not fit easily with Augustine's perception of

his inner man. He proposes that Augustine's self-awareness makes him conscious only of inner paradox -

“struggle, a brokenness, a gift, a process of healing, a resistance to healing, an emptiness, a reference that impels one not to concentrate on oneself, in the end, but on that to which one's self-awareness propels one, to God”(Cavadini, 2007, p.123).

Augustine is not seeking a purified soul to establish his own Christian identity, but rather seeks for his own heart to be transfigured so that it becomes like Christ's heart. The sense of inner restlessness thus becomes evidence of the true Christian pilgrimage.

In writing his *Confessions* Augustine prays that God will not abandon the work he has begun in his life but –

“Make perfect my imperfections”(Conf. X, iv).

He values himself and his story highly enough to hope that others may benefit from his words. The narrative shows his faith, learned from his own experience, that a human life such as his own, that God has created, called out of chaos, loved and shaped, must be a life worth living and loving. However Augustine is concerned to emphasise that it is not human endeavour that makes human achievement worthwhile. It is God's grace which brings value and success. The Augustinian concept of grace owes much to his neo-platonic background. Cary (2008) explains that grace in platonic terms means a source of help for strengthening the human will in loving the eternal One.

“The core meaning of grace for Augustine is determined not by its negative function of offering an alternative to merit but by its positive role of helping the human will, conceived in Platonist terms, as finding its fulfilment in love of eternal Truth” (Cary, 2008, p. 7).

Augustine takes St. Paul's understanding of grace and interprets it in the light of his neo-platonic stance. Human beings struggle against sinful desire but through faith in Christ grace is poured into human hearts so that men and women develop a genuine love of what is right. As he regrets his sinful dreams in Book X Augustine writes –

“It cannot be the case, almighty God, that your hand is not strong enough to cure all the sicknesses of my soul and, by a more

abundant outflow of your grace, to extinguish the lascivious impulses of my sleep. You will more and more increase your gifts in me, Lord, so that my soul, rid of the glue of lust, may follow me to you, so that it is not in rebellion against itself”(Conf. X, xxx).

Augustine asks God to strengthen his reason so that he may develop his self-control and find inner unity. Hundert agrees that Augustine sees the virtuous life flowing from a new, unified self with a new reborn will.

“Only as a fully self-present subject, only as a person whose scattered self was reintegrated into a prelapsarian unity, could one irresistibly be drawn to the good, for only this re-formed self had a reborn will” (Hundert, 1992, p. 99).

In the *Confessions* therefore Augustine is concerned to know himself and his weaknesses completely so that he can bring the whole truth of himself to God.

“Behold, you have loved the truth, for he who does the truth comes to the light. This I desire to do before you in confession, but before many witnesses with my pen” (Conf. X, i).

In Book X he explores within himself and delves into the mystery of memory attempting to understand his inner life. God is known within his mind and his memory but is not the mind or memory itself. When God fills him completely he will no longer experience pain and toil.

“But for the present, because I am not full of you, I am a burden to myself” (Conf, X, xxviii).

Augustine’s developing relationship with God is cerebral and emotional. In the *Confessions* the Psalms in particular are a rich source for quotations. Augustine uses them endlessly to give a sense of drama to his writing. He finds in the Psalms a language through which he can begin to express the emotional power of his new vocation.

“He had gradually entered a new world of religious sentiments, he had undergone experiences which he could only express in the language of the Psalms. It was the language of a man who addressed a jealous God, a God whose hand was always ready to stretch out over the destinies of men” (Brown, 1967, p.174).

Although in his later career Augustine is shown to be a conscientious Bishop, the active life of love and care of one’s neighbour is valued less highly in the *Confessions* than the life of contemplation. A comparison

with the later teachings of Pope Gregory the Great (AD590-604) illuminates this point further. Gregory teaches that the love and care of one's neighbour lifts the soul to God as effectively as does the life of contemplation.

“love of God and love of neighbour are complementary and interdependent. And the more the Christian is drawn beyond himself in such charity, the more he becomes like Christ”(Straw, 1988, p. 91).

The self-examination in the *Confessions* is concerned however, in neo-platonic style, with Augustine's own inner feelings and reactions.

“But when I love you, what do I love? It is not physical beauty nor temporal glory nor the brightness of light dear to earthly eyes [...] It is not these I love when I love my God. Yet there is a light I love, and a food, and a kind of embrace when I love my God – a light, voice, odour, food, embrace of my inner man, where my soul is floodlit by light which space cannot contain” (Conf. X, vi).

This experience of the divine super-natural assures Augustine of his own inner super-natural identity. The *Confessions* is the story of one soul's journey to God but Augustine sees himself and his experience, within his contemporary philosophical and Biblical narrative tradition, as representative of every human being. His narrative construction of his self-identity is seen as a model for humankind and as such it has continued to influence Christian theology and church doctrine through the centuries. Christianity and neo-platonic thinking become forever intertwined after Augustine.

Writing the *Confessions* allows Augustine to explore and express the development of his faith from a standpoint ten years on from his conversion. He looks back and understands himself, restless and searching, being drawn towards the truth of the Christian God and the truth about himself. Turner argues that the writing of the autobiography demonstrates that firstly Augustine has become a self and secondly that the act of writing contributes to the making of the self of whom it is the story.

“Unless I am a self, there is no story to be told. Unless there is some thread of meaning, in terms of selfhood, to the events of my life,

there is no coherence to the story. We might say, 'no self, no autobiography'. [...] we might also say, and for the same reason, 'no autobiography, no self'. For Augustine's writing of the *Confessions* is his act of appropriating his own selfhood by means of appropriating the narrative which gives it its coherence and meaning. [...] he writes [...] to make the self he reveals" (Turner, 1995, p. 56-7).

This interpretation of Augustine's story connects with contemporary sociological understandings of self-identity building. Sociologist Anthony Giddens speaks of the creation of self-identity as a "reflexive project" (1991, p.5). The reflexive self is constructed, according to Giddens, through building a coherent narrative of self-identity. Our past, present and future are brought together in a personal life story that enables us to make sense of our experience and our surroundings.

"The narrative of self-identity has to be shaped, altered and reflexively sustained in relation to rapidly changing circumstances of social life, on a local and global scale."

Stability is only possible-

"if the person is able to develop an inner authenticity – a framework of basic trust by means of which the lifespan can be understood as a unity against the backdrop of shifting social events" (Giddens, 1991,p.215).

The concept of a unity emerging from the reflexive project of narrative self-building relates closely to Stroup's suggestion that identification with the Christian theological narrative and tradition can provide a secure basis for Christian self-identity building.

MacIntyre agrees that –

"man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal."

He argues that the unity of an individual life –

"is the unity of a narrative embodied in a single life" (MacIntyre,1985, p. 216-218).

He uses the concept of a narrative quest as the framework within which a person can find unity of self-identity. Borrowing from the tradition of the medieval knightly quest for virtue and honour he sees human beings on a quest for the good - that is the good for themselves, their families and communities; and in keeping with the medieval tradition, it is not the end

of the journey that counts but the change, growth and development that happens to the individual along the way. One's own life story is not an isolated story however.

"The story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity. I am born with a past; and to try to cut myself off from that past, in the individualist mode, is to deform my present relationships. The possession of an historical identity and the possession of a social identity coincide" (MacIntyre, 1985, p. 221).

This point about identity being embedded in the narrative of a group or community is particularly important for those who belong to a Christian community. With Stroup (1981) I question in my research how far my research actors understand their identities through their membership of their various church communities. How far does the narrative of scripture, Old and New Testament, and the liturgy of the church, inform their Christian self-identity in the workplace? In many church communities the practice of telling one's faith story is a way of sharing testimony about one's faith and providing mutual encouragement. Narrative theology however insists that such story-telling must be done within the larger framework of the story of Christ and the Bible. Personal faith stories are only points of growth if they relate to the Church's story.

"The purpose of telling our faith story is to point others towards faith in God through Jesus Christ. It is not to make us seem clever or especially religious. It is about being realistic about the ups and downs, the joys and sorrows of life and how God in Jesus travels this way with us. It is also to make us think and pray about where we go next. How can we grow in our relationship with God in the future?" (Price, 2009, p. 8).

Stanley Hauerwas agrees that the church should be the place -

"where character and narrative meet. The community is shaped by the Christian story, and in turn it shapes the character of its members. It does so particularly by their performance of its story, notably in worship, but also in other distinctive practices such as peacemaking and disciplined forgiving. The church for Hauerwas is a colony, an island of one culture in the middle of another" (Lawson, 2008, p. 424).

Such an extreme doctrine which creates so separate an island of culture raises questions about how Christian identities formed within this culture

can relate to the world beyond. Lawson quotes Rowan Williams who suggests an opposing view - that whilst there is a need to revive scriptural imagination to interpret the world, there is also a need for Christians to be formed by confrontation and dialogue with the world.

“The church may find out what scripture itself is saying in her confrontations with the world. The Christian community may be enlarged in understanding and even in some sense evangelized in such encounters with those beyond the theological mainstream” (Williams in Lawson, 2008, p.425).

Augustine’s consideration of the relationship between the two worlds of church and world, and how this should shape individual Christians and the church, is fully explored in his major work - *City of God*. The Bishop begins to write *City of God* at the instigation of his friend, Flavius Marcellinus, Imperial Commissioner in Carthage from AD410. Marcellinus was a baptised Christian and found himself under attack for his faith from powerful pagan elements in the administration. The Roman Empire was by this time beginning to crumble - Rome was sacked in AD410 and Italy was gradually being overrun by the Goths. Many wealthier Romans went into exile in North Africa and began to blame Christianity for the fall of the Empire. Their argument was that the abandonment of the Roman gods in favour of the Christian God had caused the downfall of Rome and the Empire. Marcellinus asked Augustine to write a defence of Christianity in the face of these allegations. Augustine was perhaps the best-placed person to do this because of his intimate knowledge both of the pagan histories and philosophers, as well as the Christian faith and scriptures. The first ten books of *City of God* are therefore devoted to refuting the accusations of the educated pagans and pointing out that disasters also happened when the old gods were being worshipped (Book III). Augustine’s doctrine of two cities, earthly and heavenly, based on his theology of “two loves”, is the subject of the rest of the book.

Augustine teaches that during the present age the two cities are intermingled and inseparable. Citizens of both cities mix together and no-one

can be sure of their final destination. God alone, through His grace, saves those He has chosen and brings them to membership of His city at the final judgement. Augustine's theology has significant implications therefore for the status and role of the church, and its relationship to the world.

"Sacred and profane, for him, interpenetrate in the saeculum; the secular is neutral, ambivalent, but no more profane than it is sacred. His image of the Church is that of a 'secular' institution: the language in which it is described is that which the Bible applies to the 'world'. 'World' and 'Church' are co-extensive: there is a real distinction to be drawn between them, but it is eschatological rather than sociological or historical" (Markus, 1970, pp. 122-123).

With Constantine's Edict of Toleration in AD313 Christianity had gained equal status with other religions in the Roman Empire. The numbers of churchgoers had grown significantly, with increasing numbers of educated and wealthy Romans becoming believers. By Augustine's time there had even been some assimilation of the church into the institutions of state. Some Christians felt that the distinctive identity of Christians was being lost in a society that was increasingly informed by Catholic influences. Augustine was also aware that many in the churches were outwardly observing the Christian faith whilst still pursuing pagan practices and behaviours. Markus sees the cult of the martyrs, which grew up at this time, as a response to this search for separate identity. Looking back to and identifying with the time when Christians were persecuted for their faith, reminded believers of their recent distinctive and different nature. The interest in relics of saints, and shrines to martyrs within churches, are indications of this nostalgia for the first centuries of the Christian faith (Markus, 1990, pp.92-95).

Augustine's theology of the church as a 'secular' institution has implications too for the status of baptism. Augustine agreed with the Donatists and the Pelagians, his continuing religious adversaries between AD400 and AD415, that baptism marks out a Christian from other human beings, but he saw baptism as a first step in the Christian

pilgrimage towards the blessed life. It indicates a desire to change but cannot on its own bring about Christian perfection.

“In Augustine’s view baptism launched a Christian on a lifelong process of convalescence, rather than curing him at once and enabling him to make a clean break with his past. He had long ago learnt to appreciate the insidious force of habit. [...] In the last resort, the individual Christian, like the Church, remains always deeply infected with sin” (Markus, 1990, p. 54).

The Donatists, who saw the church as equivalent to God’s kingdom, and therefore a community of perfection – the elect of God – understood baptism as the point of entry to this separate, elite community. For them the church could never be part of this world. The moment of baptism remitted sin and achieved salvation. Similarly, Pelagius wanted Christians to be holy and perfect, and withdraw from the world into separate monastic communities. For him again baptism marked a complete and utter change in a person’s life and status. The true Christian has to choose to leave the secular world behind and adopt an ascetic lifestyle. Augustine’s theology is much more pragmatic and realistic. It offers hope of salvation to everyone regardless of their status. Above all it places the decision about membership of God’s kingdom back into God’s hands, and makes salvation totally dependent on God’s grace. Human beings have free will but that will is damaged by the inheritance from Adam and Eve of humankind’s sin. Grace alone can repair and strengthen human beings’ will and give them the power to love God and follow Christ. Augustine’s theology offers a structure for being honest about our own limitations in our faith and a way to achieve realistic Christian living in the world.

RS Thomas reflects on the challenge of honestly knowing oneself, one's story and one's own identity. There are depths within us that defy definition. Our mirror image poses more questions than answers.

Reflections

*The furies are at home
in the mirror; it is their address.
Even the clearest water,
if deep enough can drown.*

*Never think to surprise them.
Your face approaching ever
so friendly is the white flag
they ignore. There is no truce*

*with the furies. A mirror's temperature
is always at zero. It is ice
in the veins. Its camera
is an X-ray. It is a chalice*

*held out to you in
silent communion, where gaspingly
you partake of a shifting
identity never your own.*

(Thomas, 2004, p.235)

The quest for the happy (blessed) life : frameworks for living

In Book X of the *Confessions* Augustine ponders his long journey to Christian faith and asks why he was driven to continue the quest. He argues that every human being is seeking to be happy and asks if this means that a trace of the happy or blessed life remains in everyone's memory.

“My question is whether the happy life is in the memory. For we would not love it if we did not know what it is. We have heard the term, and all of us acknowledge that we are looking for the thing (Conf. X, xx).

Later he describes what that happy life is for him.

“This is the authentic happy life, to set one's joy on you (*God*), grounded in you and caused by you. That is the real thing, and there is no other. Those who think that the happy life is elsewhere, pursue another joy and not the true one. Nevertheless their will remains drawn towards some image of the true joy” (Conf. X, xxii).

Augustine finally finds in the Christian faith and community both a framework for his life and a motivation for virtuous living within that framework. Within this belief he develops a unified sense of self-identity and experiences some inner security. Augustine progresses through a series of different religious and philosophical narratives before he finds stability in Catholic Christianity. He is a product first of all of two very different formative influences – the North African Catholic church and a classical, pagan education. Both influences are deeply embedded in him from childhood onwards.

Augustine's first experience of church is through his mother Monica, a fervent Catholic Christian in the North African church. The *Confessions* paint a picture of a fiercely possessive, proud and determined woman.

“She clung to traditional practices in the African church, that educated men had always dismissed as ‘primitive’, to Sabbath fasts, and meals at the tombs of the dead. [...] Above all, she was a woman of deep inner resources; her certainties were unnerving; the dreams by which she foresaw the course of her son's life were impressive, and she was confident that she could tell, instinctively which of these dreams were authentic” (Brown, 1967, p. 29).

Augustine therefore grows up in the shadow of the austere yet primitive North African church, yet Monica's religious fervour is matched by her determination to gain for her son a good education, secular career and advantageous marriage. There seems to be no tension between her adherence to her faith and her desire for Augustine to succeed in the world of the Roman Empire. It is accepted by Augustine's mother and father that only a civil career in teaching or politics can lift the family from the genteel poverty endured by Augustine's father, Patricius, a minor Roman landowner. Augustine is therefore brought up within the paradox of a pagan, classical education and a Christian home, and it is that pagan education that takes him away from his Christian roots in North Africa to Rome and Milan and opens the door for him to new ideas and philosophies of religions. Lancel notes that it is secular ambition that takes Augustine and his mother to Milan in AD384.

"Augustine had come to Milan to realize his career ambitions, and incidentally to advance along the path glimpsed since his reading of *Hortensius* twelve years earlier. For Monica [...] the two went hand in hand. The Christian in her doubtless gave priority to the ecclesiastical sanction of the spiritual progress she sensed in her son, but the mother was no less keen on his success in this life. Among the important people she noticed in Milan, from rather a distance, there was no lack on the Christian side of good examples of dignitaries who had been able to reconcile the demands of faith with those of their career" (Lancel, 1999 , trans .2002, p. 71).

In the late Roman Empire Christians are beginning to assume places of power in secular society yet intellectual, academic power still rests with the pagan, classic philosophers. Although Augustine maintains a relationship with the Catholic church, he struggles to find anything to respect in the church's scriptures. In comparison with Vergil and Cicero the Latin Bible of the North African church seemed to Augustine primitive and unappealing.

"What Augustine read in the Bible seemed to have little to do with the highly spiritual Wisdom that Cicero had taught him to love. It was cluttered up with earthy and immoral stories from the Old Testament; and even in the New Testament, Christ, Wisdom Himself, was introduced by long , and contradictory, genealogies" (Brown, 1967, p. 42).

It is in Milan, however, under the influence of Bishop Ambrose, that Augustine decides to abandon the Manichees and become a catechumen in the Catholic church. He records himself at the end of Book V as in a state of indecision about the truth of any philosophy or faith. Membership of the church seems almost like a safety net.

“Accordingly, after the manner of the Academics, as popularly understood, I doubted everything, and in the fluctuating state of total suspense of judgement I decided I must leave the Manichees [...] I therefore decided for the time being to be a catechumen in the Catholic Church, which the precedent of my parents recommended to me, until some clear light should come by which I could direct my course” (Conf. V, xiv).

Book VI of the *Confessions* records how Augustine deals with his intellectual anxieties about Christian faith. The theology of Genesis 1, where God makes man in his own image, is finally understood, after a sermon from Ambrose, as a spiritual rather than physical statement. Augustine had previously believed that the church taught that God was limited to a physical human form (Conf. VI, iii). Likewise, the Old Testament writings of the Law and the Prophets, which Augustine had previously dismissed as immoral and absurd, are now seen as allegorical, to be understood on a spiritual level. Ambrose’s expositions of scripture provide a new way of making the Old Testament acceptable to Augustine’s academically and philosophically trained mind (Conf. VI, iv). The importance for him of questioning the church’s teachings and finding his own path to faith resonates with the questioning spirit of our own age. For Augustine the church has to prove its authority and earn his allegiance. It is one faith option amongst many in a similar way to the choices of our own postmodern world. The story of Victorinus’s conversion and profession of faith at the beginning of Book VIII of the *Confessions* illustrates how the worlds of intellectual enquiry and the Catholic church were separated in the early years of Augustine’s lifetime. Pagan rites and philosophy were bound up together and seen as supporting the seat of secular power. The church, though growing in influence, is still seen as a place for the uneducated. Victorinus, formerly a powerful Roman pagan philosopher, chooses to set pride aside and

make a public declaration of his new Christian faith. The seeking of baptism and the acceptance of the authority of the Catholic church are courageous and life-changing steps for those in the academic elite. The mockery of the powerful is the major hazard in choosing Christian faith. It is notable that Augustine, after his conversion in the garden, recorded in Book VIII of the *Confessions*, is pleased to be able to retire quietly from his teaching responsibilities because the summer holidays are starting and relieved that he can excuse his non-return to academia by pleading poor health.

After his conversion to Catholicism Augustine retires with a group of friends and relatives to Cassiciacum, a country villa lent by a friend, to read and reflect on his new faith. This sort of “otium liberale” or cultured retirement was a recognised tradition in the Roman world. Men of intellect would withdraw from society to enter “a life of creative leisure, dedicated to serious pursuits.” (Brown, 1967, p. 115). Augustine adopts the pattern of this retirement and proposes to his friends an experiment in community living, withdrawn from the world, in order to live a full, perfect contemplative Christian life. On his return to Thagaste, in North Africa, following the death of his mother, Augustine pursues this experiment and gathers round him a small group of like-minded thinkers. Such men, intellectual and celibate, were known in the Roman world as “*Servi Dei*” – Servants of God. They were educated, baptised laymen –

“determined to live, in the company of bishops, priests and noble patrons, the full life of a Christian” (Brown, 1967, p.132).

Augustine’s community lasted for less than 3 years – from AD388 to 391, but it formed the basis for his monastery community at Hippo which he founded after his ordination as priest in AD391. At this time Augustine saw the contemplative life as the perfect way of Christian living. Modelling his thinking on the traditions of the great philosophers and the early Christian desert fathers, he wanted to live an ascetic, monastic existence pondering theological mysteries and studying scripture. However, the life-changing events of AD391 when Augustine is called by the church at Hippo to be ordained and becomes a busy working

presbyter, and then in AD395 when he becomes Bishop of Hippo, bring about a change in his attitude. He begins to accept that for working people the ideal Christian life is impossible to achieve. No one can live permanently in the contemplative state or fully in the presence of God. Human beings' tendency to evil begins to seem to him as an overwhelmingly engrained habit. Working as a priest and coming into closer contact with ordinary men and women he sees that they are helpless to lift themselves out of their physical weakness and sinfulness. Augustine re-interprets St Paul's tension between "flesh" and "Spirit" and begins to work out his theology of grace, salvation and pre-destination. It is only through grace that anyone can come to faith and be saved. Augustine's changed perspective is critical in the development of protestant Reformation theology but also relevant to this research. As Augustine's thinking progresses, particularly in his disagreement with Pelagius after AD410, he comes to insist that there can never be two classes of Christian – the perfect contemplative and the working believer. All Christians are called to pursue perfection.

"Mediocrity and perfection were no longer on opposite sides of a great divide that cut through the Christian community, creating a two-tier Church. For Pelagius the whole community had to be perfect; for Augustine the ordinary Christian was no more remote from grace and salvation than the monk or ascetic. All are called to pursue perfection; none attain it here, but all are commanded to run so as to obtain the prize" (Markus, 1990, p. 65).

Augustine's acceptance of "Christian mediocrity" opens the way for all believers to find their own way to serve, work out their salvation and live the blessed life in the circumstances of their ordinary, daily lives. As already noted, his theology also accepts a realistic view of the church as an earthly and man-made institution – a secular institution.

Augustine's view of the church as a secular institution did not survive in the increasing Christianisation of Western Europe. The rise of clericalism and the increase of the power of the church in affairs of state changed the character of the institution so that earthly and heavenly authority became understood as intertwined, and the eschatological perspective of

the true church was lost. Christian systems of government and law emerged providing a moral framework for living which encompassed all citizens. The Christian meta-narrative dominated and pluralism disappeared until the Enlightenment so that tensions between seeking the good of the earthly city and seeking the heavenly city also ceased to exist. For many centuries the blessed life could only be found via the church and through the Christian narrative. Most people found their self-identity through their membership of their local communities and family groups which were often synonymous with their church communities. Thus for nearly 1500 years the Christian meta-narrative in Western Europe dominated every aspect of life- moral, political and social.

In our own time this over-arching framework has broken down so that we again live in a pluralistic society in the West. People have to find their own frameworks or narratives within which they can establish their own ethical values. A multiplicity of different traditions, old and new, offer a range of moral frameworks for living. MacIntyre believes that ethical values or virtues are grounded however in the narrative tradition of a community and for him a key virtue is an understanding of one's own tradition. He insists that any moral identity of the self is found -

“in and through its membership in communities such as those of the family, the neighbourhood, the city and the tribe” (MacIntyre, 1985, p. 221).

The relationship between the Judeo/Christian meta-narrative and ethics is central to this research. For Christians in the workplace the traditional ethical narrative of Christianity provides a framework within which self-identity can be explored and expressed. This framework may conflict of course with the generally accepted ethical narrative of the workplace community itself. Tensions in self-identity may be deeply felt. Stroup argues however that understanding the Christian faith entails not just knowing what beliefs mean but interpreting them for action in one's life.

“To understand Christian faith is to know what forms of life are appropriate to it. Furthermore, understanding is not just knowing something about faith, but more importantly it is knowing what

faith means in the context of one's personal history and existence" (Stroup, 1981, p.211).

However, our secular workplaces are influenced by the meta-narrative of the Enlightenment which suggests that rational thinking can define ethics and that there can be a scientific ideal of objectivity which frees moral behaviour from religious belief. Hauerwas and Burrell (1997) offer a critique of this stance taken by Kant and Enlightenment philosophers. They argue that such a rationalist view in ethics requires human beings to become alienated from their decisions, seeing them as observer rather than agent. Reason has to control desire; past experience and story have to be separated from present decisions. Such a philosophy is challenged by Christian theology which sees human alienation resulting from such an attitude of human self-sufficiency.

When the self tries to be more than it was meant to be, it becomes alienated from itself and all its relations are disordered" (Hauerwas and Burrell, 1997, p. 172).

Hauerwas and Burrell suggest that a human being's relationship to God as well as to other human beings is damaged by the dominance of rational, self-sufficient moral frameworks. Using the *Confessions* as an example they argue that Augustine's story shows how his many disordered relationships, based on different belief narratives, gradually become relativised to the one overriding and ordering relationship with God based on the Christian narrative. Moving from the narrative of Manicheism, through neo-platonism to the Bible and church, Augustine finally allows the gospel story to shape his own life story. Moral character is built up not through making a series of decisions, choosing a lesser evil, based on rational thinking – but through living with a set of beliefs and values which inform all decisions.

"We discover our human self more effectively through these stories, and so use them in judging the adequacy of alternative schemes for humankind" (Hauerwas and Burrell, 1997, p.190).

Others have critiqued the meta-narrative of Christianity in the West arguing that it has created an ethics of domination and control of the self rather than acting as a liberating and creative force. Philosopher Michel

Foucault depicts Christianity as a confessional religion, seeing that as a means for domination and normalisation of individuals and communities by leaders. But Lynch argues that Foucault only has a partial understanding of what confession and obedience mean within the church community. He asserts that the language of faith is easily misunderstood by those who stand outside the faith community. He notes however –

“Christianity, in Foucault’s diagnosis, was complicit in the development of forms of discipline now exercised by other structures of power” (Lynch, 2009, p. 139).

As previously noted, systems of government, law, justice and education in the West owe much to the Christian meta-narrative. The moral framework of the faith still exerts power in our society although many do not understand or know the tradition or narrative from which the framework draws its power. A university institution is particularly informed by this meta-narrative.

The concept of “professionalism” is a further development in the story of workplace ethics. This is a modern phenomenon created in nineteenth century Western Europe. It is important in the workplace narratives in this research because it overlaps with understandings of Christian ethical behaviour at work and vocation. Professionalism is based on a “professional knowledge base” (Eraut, 1994, p. 1) owned, defended and cultivated by a group of experts such as doctors, lawyers, university lecturers. This expertise gives the profession a source of power and influence in society. It guarantees their status and wage-earning potential and membership of a profession demands certain behavioural and intellectual standards. In the contemporary UK university, professional status is still valued highly by many knowledge workers and provides a framework of understanding for self and relational identity. Ronald Barnett describing a new world of “supercomplexity” believes however that the framework within which universities research and teach is now changing and these changes will affect the way the university professionals see themselves.

“Professional life, especially, brings forth a melange of communication styles, of ideologies and of projected identities. Multiprofessionalism, changing professional-client relationships, changing standards and the globalization of problems dislodge any felt security over one’s inner frameworks. This is the supercomplex world that confronts graduates as they develop their careers. Professions give way to professionalism, as individual members of a profession can no longer fall back on the profession’s corpus of ‘knowledge’ and self-understandings but, instead, have to remake themselves anew with the dawning of each day” (Barnett, 2000, p. 157).

It is within this uncertain world of changing professional values that the workplace narratives of this research are created and the Christian self-identities of my research actors are constructed. The institutional culture of a contemporary university can be a powerful, moulding force on those who work within it. As noted in my introduction, Beck (1992) argues that as the traditional structures of society, such as family and social class break down in postmodernity, institutions play a greater role in shaping the biographical narratives of individuals. Workplaces, work roles, and work schedules form people’s self-identity.

“Institutional determinations and interventions are (implicitly) also determinations of and interventions in human biographies” (Beck, 1992, p. 132).

Workplace Christians thus find themselves in a world where different moral frameworks are available within which to act, and where varied versions of the “happy life” are on offer. All of this creates tensions and challenges as people of faith seek to live out an authentic self-identity.

In secular Western society religious faith is seen by many as a restricting and limited world-view. RS Thomas sees himself as “prisoner of the one view” and finds a sort of freedom in that.

At the end

*Few possessions: a chair,
a table, a bed
to say my prayers by,
and, gathered from the shore,
the bone-like, crossed sticks
proving that nature
acknowledges the Crucifixion.
All night I am at
a window not too small
to be frame to the stars
that are no further off
than the city lights
I have rejected. By day
the passers-by, who are not
pilgrims, stare through the rain's
bars, seeing me as prisoner
of the one view, I who
have been made free
by the tide's pendulum truth
that the heart that is low now
will be at the full tomorrow.*

(Thomas, 1994 p.246)

Encounter, call and gifting : the self in relationship

Augustine in his *Confessions* shows himself as a man who needs the stimulation and admiration of human friends. His Christian circle of friends at his retreat in Cassiciacum in Book IX is an intimate community of like-minded, educated individuals. Peter Brown suggests that Augustine was always vulnerable to the pain and pleasure of friendship (Brown, 1967, p. 180). He notes too that Augustine is hardly ever alone. There are always companions around with whom he can share his thinking but the Bishop sees friendship as both a danger and a blessing. In Book II as he reflects in shame on the incident of pear stealing which he blames on consorting with the wrong friends, Augustine writes -

“Friendship can be a dangerous enemy” (Conf. II, ix).

However, in contrast, In Book IV it is the death of a friend that casts him into misery. The bonds of friendship enter deeply into Augustine’s heart.

“He was half my soul. I had felt that my soul and his soul were one soul in two bodies” (Conf. IV, vi).

The other relationship in Augustine’s life which is made explicit in the *Confessions* is his relationship with his mother Monica. Monica has a deep and lasting influence on her son, driving him towards Christian faith with her constant presence and prayers. The account of her death at Ostia shows the depth of Augustine’s feelings for her. He recounts a battle between his overwhelming sense of grief at her loss and his determination to demonstrate no emotion in accordance with his new-found belief in Christian resurrection. Some time later after his mother’s burial he is able to weep and grieve naturally as he remembers her devout faith and holiness. Even so, Augustine feels the need to justify his grief in the face of those who may criticise his weakness over human loss. Neo-platonic and stoic thinking, as well as Christian faith, colour his account in the *Confessions*.

“My heart is healed of that wound; I could be reproached for yielding to that emotion of physical kinship[...] If only human beings would acknowledge themselves to be but human, and that he who glories would glory in the Lord” (Conf. IX, xiii).

Augustine is ready to admit that human relationships matter to him. The *Confessions* show the power of the relationships (with his friends and his mother) that help to form the mature Augustine's self-identity.

Giddens argues that self-consciousness and consciousness of others is accessed through language, built on experience from childhood onwards, and that –

“Trust, interpersonal relations and a conviction of the ‘reality’ of things go hand in hand in the social settings of adult life” (Giddens, 1991, p.51).

He believes that in a society every person is continually involved in creating predictable social interaction and that this orderliness is nothing less than a daily miracle. Human beings are infinitely creative through language in relationships. Sociologist Erving Goffman agrees that individuals are constantly involved in a performance of themselves when in contact with other human beings. In order for relationships to operate smoothly, participants in the relationship accept a “working consensus” in their interaction deliberately avoiding difference and conflict.

“When an individual or performer plays the same part to the same audience on different occasions, a social relationship is likely to arise” (Goffman, 1959, p.27).

Goffman suggests that an individual may comfortably play different roles depending on circumstances and environment. The self is thus a product of performance and audience in each situation and awareness of this position only occurs when relationships break down. James Day in an article on belief and language argues that religious language is similarly performative as well as informative. Religious terms have meaning because of what they do and, following Goffman, because they are part of a particular set of social interactions. Day underlines the importance of narratives in religious belief because they provide a shared way to speak of faith.

“Belief, because of its narrative components, may be viewed as a function of the audience to whom it is played, just as stories are a function of the audience to whom they are told. Beliefs depend on an audience by whom the believer can be understood, and there is no belief independent of the narrative forms that fund its

construction, reformation, and communication” (Day, 1993, p. 225).

The language of belief is seen here as indicative of the reality of faith, and that reality can only be expressed narratively, and in the faith community.

Herbert Blumer (1969) develops the term “symbolic interactionism” to express the way in which human beings interact with their world and assign meaning to objects and ideas on the basis of shared understanding within a society. Following George Herbert Mead’s view that the self is a process rather than a structure, Blumer argues that it is the ability to be reflexive, able to interpret one’s own experience in the world that makes human beings unique creatures. Patterns of group life are established when interpretation is shared between individuals. For a group to thrive there must be

“continued use of the same schemes of interpretation; and such schemes of interpretation are maintained only through their continued confirmation by the defining acts of others (Blumer, 1969, p. 67).

Symbolic interactionism supports the view that self-consciousness and self-identity are only constructed in relationship and interaction with other human beings.

Fragmentation of identity occurs then when social relations are broken. Augustine himself recognises his own brokenness in his conflicting wills and desires driven by his need to impress others. He reflects on his unruly behaviour as a student in Carthage and admits that it was due to his yearning for admiration from his fellows.

“I wanted to distinguish myself as an orator for a damnable and conceited purpose, namely delight in human vanity” (Conf. III, iv).

Christian theology continues to ascribe the problems of the fragmented self to human pride and the desire to be self-sufficient, denying relationship with God. H. Richard Niebuhr argues that true inner unity of self flows from relationship with God:

“In religious language, the soul and God belong together; or otherwise stated, I am one within myself as I encounter the One in all that acts upon me” (Niebuhr, 1963, p.122).

Niebuhr sees the worldly self in continual internal division and conflict as it seeks to respond to the surrounding circumstances and environment. The self responds to actions upon it as it interprets the questions being asked of it and anticipates the effect on itself and others of its responses. The person of faith tries to see God in all the circumstances that act upon him or her, but even so struggles to unify his or her responses. This disunity in response is according to Niebuhr, the effect of sin.

“my human condition, my condition in self-hood rather, and that of my companions, is one of internal division and conflict because though I am one and though they are one in themselves, yet I and they are surrounded by many agencies, many systems of action upon the self; these are diverse from each other, and to their actions the self makes unreconciled, ununified responses” (Niebuhr, 1963, p. 137).

The concept of the growth of unified self-identity through relationship with God and other human beings is accepted by other theologians. McFadyen sees human individuality and self-identity built up in relationships with God and with other human beings. It is –

“sedimented through relations in which one is intended and addressed as an autonomous subject of communication by God and others” (McFadyen, 1990, p. 23).

He argues that the self is not a –

“substance but a means of organising one’s experience, thought, knowledge, beliefs, actions etc. as though centred on a substantial core. That is to say, it is something like a belief or theory” (McFadyen, 1990, p.99).

When Christian belief becomes the means of organising the self, Christian identity is built in the ongoing relationship with God and other human beings. McFadyen argues that self-identity fragmentation can be overcome as believers come into a living relationship with God in Christ. He sees this as the liberation message of the Gospels – Jesus frees people from their broken and damaged identities by bringing them into a healing relationship with Himself.

“Jesus found broken, closed and communicatively distorted people in distorted and closed relational networks. The Gospel set people free by placing them firmly in an alternative communication context from which a new identity could be sedimented, even though their social situation might remain materially unchanged” (McFadyen, 1990, p.118).

The classic text “I and Thou” by Martin Buber speaks from the Hebrew tradition in the same vein. Buber too argues that true being and identity only develop as the human person meets God and other human beings. Man cannot find true life by his own efforts; it is only as he is met through grace by “Thou” that he glimpses reality.

“Concentration and fusion into the whole being can never take place through my agency, nor can it ever take place without me. I become through my relation to the *Thou*; as I become *I*, I say *Thou*. All real living is meeting” (Buber, 1923, p. 17).

In Christian belief it is the relationship with God which gives human life its meaning and purpose. Each believer has a calling from God which gives his or her life direction. In a collection of sermons and addresses – “Open to judgement” – given by Rowan Williams and published in 1994- the Archbishop speaks of vocation as the state of being in the truth about ourselves when all unreality and posturing has been stripped away.

“to talk about God as your creator means to recognize at each moment that it is his desire for you to be, and so his desire for you to be there as the person you are. It means he is calling you by your name, at each and every moment, wanting you to be you” (Williams, 1994, p. 174).

Finding our true selves however is not the end of the story. Each human being has to –

“work to find the structure and form of life that is most our own because it leaves us most alert, most responsive, most open to the never-failing grace of God” (Williams, 1994, p.184).

This broad view of vocation fits well with Augustine’s narrative of self-discovery in the *Confessions*. He speaks of his belief that God was calling his name throughout his life and that it was only his own deafness and blindness to that call during his youth which prevented him from coming to the truth. Augustine records his recognition of God’s call in

Christ and acceptance of the narrative of the Catholic church of his day in Book VIII. This initial acceptance brings him within the church but it takes some time before his new-found faith becomes a living relationship with God. It is only as he looks back at his experience some eleven years after his conversion in Book X that he is able to express something of the depth of meaning that his faith has now come to hold and his sense of the personal nature of God's call.

Augustine also recognises that he has certain gifts, talents and qualities that enable him to do the work to which God has called him as teacher and Bishop. Even in Book 1 of the *Confessions* he writes of being aware of his qualities of truthfulness, having a good memory, being skilful with words. He acknowledges that these are God's gifts to him as is his very existence.

“I thank you for your gifts. Keep them for me, for in this way you will keep me. The talents you have given will increase and be perfected, and I will be with you since it was your gift to me that I exist” (Conf. 1, xx).

The concept of having God-given gifts and talents which are to be used in Christian living and working is a theme that recurs throughout this research. It has scriptural roots – the parable of the talents (Luke 19: 11-26) and St. Paul's explanation in Ephesians 4 of the gifts of the Spirit given by God to build up the Church. Miroslav Volf's theology of work reflects this spirit-filled teaching. He sees relationship with God providing the basis of human identity and offers a pneumatological understanding of work – one where God empowers and gifts individuals for work through the Holy Spirit.

“when grace gifts and enables a person to do a particular task, then it stands at the very heart of her work” (Volf, 1991, p.125).

He sees this differing from a vocational understanding of work where human beings respond to God's call only through obedience and duty. A pneumatological understanding allows a response in work from the heart.

Protestantism and in particular, Puritanism, have built on these scriptural roots to justify a narrower view of vocation that encourages Christians to see their workplace experience as the place where they are called to use their talents to serve God. Martin Luther (1483-1546), the great reformation leader, believed that any respectable or useful work was a vocation from God. This was in contrast with contemporary understandings which suggested that clerical or monastic service was the only recognisable Godly vocation. Luther, like Augustine, sees the Christian living in two worlds. One is this earth where believers are given a station or vocation through which to serve their fellow human beings. This service is the Christian life and represents the outworking of God's creative love through his people on earth. The second is God's Kingdom of Heaven, where neither good works nor earthly vocation count for anything. Faith alone counts for righteousness in that Kingdom.

“Works belong to the earthly realm, in service to others, directed downward in vocation which bears altogether the stamp of the earthly realm. And vocation is most purely and really served when through the gospel it has become clear that vocation has nothing to do with salvation. God receives that which is his, faith. The neighbour receives that which is his, works” (Wingren, 1957, p.14).

After the Reformation -

“the labour of the craftsman is honourable for he serves the community in his calling; the honest smith or shoemaker is a priest” (Tawney, 1938, p.101).

Thus it became acceptable for Christian self-identity to be defined in terms of occupation, whilst the eschatological aspect of Luther's theology was underplayed. John Calvin (1509-1564) carried Luther's doctrine of the earthly realm a step further and created a theocratic society in Geneva where Church and State were completely inter-mixed. Trade and profit, and the hard work that created them became respectable and even desirable ends. The child of Calvinism is Puritanism.

“thrift, diligence, sobriety, frugality- the foundation of the Christian virtues [...] the aptitudes cultivated by the life of business and

affairs, had stamped on them a new sanctification [...] the Christian must conduct his business with a high seriousness, as in itself a kind of religion" (Tawney, 1938, p.119).

Max Weber, German sociologist and management theorist, writing in 1904 sees the "spirit of capitalism" growing from these Protestant beliefs and values. He points out that the great paradox for Protestantism is the belief in faith alone as the way to God and the counter-belief in the value of hard work. Weber gives a name to the phenomenon that continues to haunt the European Christian in the workplace - the protestant work ethic. Miroslav Volf argues however that the protestant work ethic has become less central to the self-identity of Christians in the workplace during the course of the last century. He believes that many see their work role and status as the core element of their self-identity and self-esteem.

"Work thrives today more on the insatiable hunger for self-realization than on the Protestant work ethic. In their own eyes and in the eyes of their contemporaries, modern human beings are what they do. The kind of work they do and what they accomplish or acquire through work provides a basic key to their identity" (Volf, 1991, p.129).

Volf argues that human beings can and do develop through their work but that they can never be wholly constituted through it. Writing from a management standpoint, Charles Handy agrees. He believes however that employees usually have little opportunity to take responsibility for their work, make decisions and develop as much as they could in their work roles. The image of the "Empty raincoat" (Handy, 1994, p.1) expresses a workplace role defined by the limits of its responsibility rather than the possibilities it offers for growth and development.

RS Thomas reflects on his priestly vocation as both challenge and protection in a world where faith and the spiritual life can seem unreal and irrelevant.

*I was vicar of large things
in a small parish. Small-minded
I will not say; there were depths
in some of them I shrank back
from, wells that the word 'God'
fell into and died away,
and for all I know is still
falling. Who goes for water
to such must prepare for a long
wait. Their eyes looked at me
and were the remains of flowers
on an old grave. I was there,
I felt, to blow on ashes
that were too long cold. Often,
when I thought they were about
to unbar to me, the draught
out of their empty places
came whistling, so that I wrapped
myself in the heavier clothing
of my calling, speaking of light and love
in the thickening shadows of their kitchens.*

(Thomas, 2004, p.23)

Theoretical perspectives - conclusion

From Augustine of Hippo to RS Thomas and beyond, Christian believers seek to relate their faith to their experience facing the challenges of dualistic thinking and fragmentation of self-identity. Construction of self-identity is achieved through interpreting and responding to the narrative traditions of scripture and their own church traditions, cultures and communities. Augustine recounts his progress through a series of pagan faith narratives to final acceptance of the Catholic narrative of his own time. His story in the *Confessions* records his personal evolution and conversion interpreted through the lens of his later understanding of the Christian theological themes of body and soul, sin, will and grace. Through his autobiographical narrative Augustine seeks to understand his own heart (in modern terms his self-identity) in a hermeneutical process involving his experience, neo-platonism, scripture and the accepted Christian tradition of his day. Similarly RS Thomas, contemporary poet-priest, speaks in his later verse from inside the Anglican faith narrative. Shaped by this tradition and resistant to all attempts to modernise the church and the liturgy, he explores sacred words and concepts, testing them in a personal search for meaning and self-identity in our pluralistic postmodern world.

Narrative theology suggests that such building of self-identity is critical for Christians in any age. Within a framework of ecclesiastical tradition, scripture, culture and their own experience, believers can develop meaningful, unified personal narratives of Christian self-identity which can be sustained in the tensions of daily living. Sociology, psychology and philosophy agree that a unified self is constructed through and located in coherent social, relational and personal autobiographical narratives. Such personal theories provide moral frameworks for living. In a Christian belief system the relationship to God – at the heart of all other relationships – can provide a bond that not only unifies the narrative of the self but also gives it meaning and purpose. Vocation, in the broad sense of calling from God, is another way of expressing this central relationship with the divine. Within their workplace experience

Christians interpret their vocation and faith traditions in order to develop coherent self-identities. This research explores examples of workplace stories and the autobiographical building of Christian self-identities seen therein. The stories are viewed within the conceptual framework drawn from the material discussed in this chapter - Augustine's *Confessions*, related Augustinian material, and the literature on the theory of self-identity.

*I think that maybe
I will be a little surer
of being a little nearer. That's all. Eternity
is in the understanding
that that little is more than enough.*

(Thomas, 2004, p.131)

Chapter 3 Research Design and Methodology

The aim of the study and the research questions

This study sets out to identify and explore, through autobiographical narrative, self-identity expression in lay Christians at work in a contemporary workplace. It uses the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine (written cAD397) as a template and benchmark text, thus rooting the research in a classical theological example of an account of construction of self-identity through autobiographical narrative. One aspect of Augustine's work is particularly relevant to this study – that is his account of his own sense of body/soul dualism and fragmentation of self-identity. Augustine records in the *Confessions* his painful journey to Christian faith and the deep sense of disunity of self-identity that haunts him. Fragmentation of self-identity is also the question that sits at the heart of this research project. Within the broader exploration of self-identity this study asks whether a sample of today's Christian believers in a secular workplace experience similar division and fragmentation of self-identity because of their faith. The study goes on to ask, if such fragmentation exists, how these contemporary believers express it, and whether the experience of fragmentation prevents the development of any sense of a deep, cohesive work/faith self-identity. The results of the study contribute to practical theology in the further understanding of the autobiographical construction of Christian self-identity in the contemporary workplace.

The constructivist paradigm

The analysis of the research interviews sits within the constructivist paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 256) and accepts an ontology that is relativist – that is that the experiences of Christian belief and building of faith-identity are real and evidenced within the local and specific circumstances of the research setting. The constructivist paradigm

“proposes that human experience can only be understood as a subjective reality” (Morris, 2006, p.194).

This understanding of the experience of Christian faith contrasts sharply with Augustine's understanding in the *Confessions*. Augustine adopts a

positivist view of response to God – that is that there is only one true path to take. He sees himself as representative of fallen man, turned away from God. His redemption story is a story like that of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11-24). His truth is not seen as local and specific, but for all times and places. The epistemological contrast between my research actors' stories and Augustine's story helps to sharpen the focus on the analysis of issues of self-identity construction.

The constructivist approach contrasts with the naturalist approach to qualitative research. The naturalist view is that the –

“social world is in some sense ‘out there’, an external reality available to be observed and described by the researcher” (Elliott, 2005, p. 18).

In the naturalist approach the researcher attempts to stand back and observe and describe the world as it is. The constructivist view however believes that the social world is constantly in the making and that the researcher is inevitably involved in the evolving outcomes. This participatory role of the researcher is acknowledged as critical in the research process and interview analysis. In narrative research particularly the researcher collaborates with the researched to create a shared construction or a “hermeneutic dialectic” (Morris, 2006, p.194). Interpretation and meaning are co-created in the process of story telling and analysis. This expresses the way the lightly structured interviews in this study are carried out and the methods through which the interview material is analysed. It is recognised that the experience and story of each interviewee is being captured at a particular moment in time in particular circumstances. Moreover, the experience of the interview itself affects the construction of the story and the identity presented. The researcher's feelings and responses to the story, overt and covert, also affect the meanings drawn from the data. My own Christian faith and my known role as a lay chaplain in the university influence the process and the research actors' stories. I have to acknowledge that there may be occasions in my interviewees' accounts where they are telling me what they think I want to hear. This is a limitation which I acknowledge and I

try to minimise its effects by honesty in the process and ensuring as far as possible that the data is analysed with awareness of that potential response. My own emotional responses to the interviews are recorded and a robust framework for analysis is adopted (see Narrative analysis).

Narrative : an appropriate methodology

As this research is concerned with exploring experience in daily life it seems appropriate that it utilizes a narrative methodology to capture that experience. Human beings use narrative in order to remember, explain and make sense of their experience.

“Narrative is the fundamental scheme for linking individual human actions and events into interrelated aspects of an understandable composite” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 13).

Telling stories is a universally accepted, age-old method of communicating ideas and beliefs to others. As this study is particularly concerned with faith and self-identity expression in Christians, narrative seems a very natural way of recording their experience. The Christian faith itself developed from, and continues to develop through, a meta-narrative of tradition and scripture.

In this study the research actors are asked to tell the story of their life as a Christian in the workplace, drawing out those events that have been particularly important for them in that story. The creation of this work/faith narrative is a new enterprise for most of the respondents and inspires a fresh way of looking at their experience of the work/faith dialogue. In creating the narrative of their work/faith life they both provide evidence of Christian self-identity in the past and create a current identity in the telling of the stories themselves. The analysis of the stories will investigate both these aspects of construction of self-identity and seek links between the two. Narrative is thus both methodology and part of the phenomena under study in this research. (The theoretical background to the role of narrative in the construction of self-identity is dealt with further in my “Theoretical perspectives” chapter.)

Defining “narrative” and “story”

The term “narrative” is used widely in contemporary research in the social sciences. It is necessary therefore to attempt to define what I mean when I use the term in this research, and how that meaning differs from the meaning of “story”. David Rudrum argues that a complete definition of “narrative” is unnecessary to research as well as almost impossible to create.

“Narratives form a complex family of many different kinds of language games, all of them mutable depending on the narrative context, and to suppose that there is a common set of rules or a neat definition to encapsulate them all is a move that should always be treated with caution and wariness” (Rudrum, 2006, p. 202).

However, this argument is not helpful in providing clarity to writer or reader. Polkinghorne uses the two terms “narrative” and “story” as equivalents in his work (1988, p. 13-14). He notes that “story” can have connotations of make-believe but that there can also be true stories and historical stories. I have therefore adopted the following framework of understanding. “Narrative” refers generally in this study to a broad theoretical approach to story-telling. For example, I speak of work/faith narratives or biblical narratives as generic forms which underlie, encapsulate or include particular stories. “Story” is used to describe the particular accounts told in the research interviews and in St. Augustine’s account of his experience. The first term is background, the second foreground. Stephen Crites definition of “sacred” and “mundane” stories relates to this understanding. For him “sacred” stories are those fundamental narratives within which people live and make sense of their lives.

“For these are stories that orient the life of people through time, their life-time, their individual and corporate experience and their sense of style, the great powers that establish the reality of their world” (Crites, 1971, p. 295).

“Mundane” stories are implicit in the “sacred” stories but differ in that they are limited by the horizon of one, particular world. They are the day-to-day stories that parents use to induct their children into the “sacred” stories.

Empirical research and narrative validity

As with other qualitative research methodologies, a criticism of narrative methodology is that there can be limited certainty in its findings. Traditional empirical research methodologies have insisted on tests and measuring instruments to ensure validation of research results. Narrative research however –

“does not claim to represent the exact truth, but rather aims for verisimilitude – that the results have the appearance of truth or reality” (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 4).

In addition, within a constructivist paradigm, truth and reality remain relativist concepts. Thus, in this analysis of narrative, validation of results remains a challenge. Kohler Riessman (1993, pp. 65-68) suggests four ways of approaching validation in narrative work : “persuasiveness” where the question is asked –“is the interpretation reasonable and convincing?” ; “correspondence”, where “interpretations, and conclusions are tested with those groups from whom the data were originally collected”;; “coherence” , where the researcher looks for “global, local and themal” links within the recorded narratives; “pragmatic use”, describing the extent to which a study becomes the basis for others’ work.” In this research the first and third elements at least will be present. I will attempt to draw reasonable, evidence-based conclusions from the analysis, and my method of analysis uses coherence theory. This study may also provide a stimulus to further research in this area.

Clandinin and Connelly write that the narrative inquirer needs to become a kind of “I, the critic” developing a “wakefulness” that -

“allows us to proceed forward with a constant, alert awareness of risks, of narcissism, of solipsism, and of simplistic plots, scenarios, and unidimensional characters.”

They recommend that this wakefulness is fostered within –

“response communities where diversity is cherished” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 182)

I am fortunate to work within a supportive and diverse university research community which offers opportunities for sharing and exploring my

findings. In particular my membership of a local researchers' group has provided a place where I can present and defend my research in a supportive environment. I discuss issues of validity further in my "Narrative analysis" section.

Truth and knowledge

Positivism suggests that there is a reality to be discovered which is objective truth. Christian faith has traditionally resided within this paradigm with its meta-narrative of scripture and its structures and liturgies within the Church. However, postmodernism, pluralism and relativism question the idea of the meta-narrative and suggest that even within a single faith tradition there may be many different truths and realities depending on the believer's environment and circumstances. Beyond organized religion there are also multiple ways to access a sense of human fulfillment and potency.

"The 'whole experience' of revelation, ecstasy, breaking the boundaries of the self and total transcendence – once the privilege of the selected 'aristocracy of culture' [...] has been put by postmodern culture within every individual's reach, recast as a realistic target and plausible prospect of each individual's self-training" (Bauman, 1998, p. 70).

This research takes a constructivist, postmodernist stance, accepting that whilst declared faith in Jesus Christ is a commonality between all the research actors – that faith and the sense of self-identity that flows from it, may be expressed and interpreted in as many different ways as there are individuals.

Issues of truth and knowledge are also highlighted in the intended outcomes of this research project. Whilst doctoral work is generally expected to contribute to the theoretical framework of knowledge in a discipline, narrative inquiry may result more in new senses of "meaning and significance with respect to the research topic" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 42). For this reason a purely grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1968) to analysis of the research material is rejected in favour of two different approaches. The first seeks themal

coherence in each story and draws evidence of claimed self-identity from that coherence. The second places the narrative in an experiential framework and seeks a consistent thread of self-identity within that framework. Whilst common themes will be identified in the analysis, there will be no sense of developing strict categories of self-identity within which individuals will be placed.

“In formalistic inquiry, people [...] are looked at as exemplars of a form - of an idea, a theory, a social category. In narrative inquiry, people are looked at as embodiments of lived stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 43).

The embodiment of self-identity within each personal story represents the truth, now, for that person, because narrative truth is both constructed and time-constrained. For this reason the findings of this research cannot be seen as generalisable and transferable across all Christians and all workplaces. The findings may however offer insights into a workplace experience and be helpful in deepening understanding of contemporary Christian practice. The analysis will be presented within broad themes paralleled in Augustine’s *Confessions* and in the theoretical background. Thus the individual interpretations of Christian self-identity in the workplace will be presented as in a “bricolage” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p.5) like different coloured panes in a new window through which light shines on old traditions. One of the aims of this study is that my findings may contribute to practical theology by giving new significance to the study of autobiographical narrative construction of self-identity in Christian believers, and new meaning to sustaining Christian self-identity in the contemporary workplace.

Research methods

Narrative as method

The research uses a variety of forms of narrative inquiry in order to elicit evidence of understanding of Christian self-identity. These methods include those of Agar and Hobbs (1982) as interpreted by Mishler (1986), Clandinin and Connelly (2000), and Wengraf (2001). Saint Augustine's *Confessions* are also used as a kind of template against which to place the research analysis in order to elicit further meaning.

Using Augustine's *Confessions* as methodological template

The link between the *Confessions* and this research lies in the use of autobiographical narrative to disclose self-identity. Both Augustine and my research actors reveal construction of Christian self-identity in their stories, and the strategies they use to achieve this. Although the world of the *Confessions* is separated from us by almost two millennia it is possible to analyse this story in the same way as a contemporary life story. Augustine selects the stories within his account carefully in order to give maximum theological significance to the events of his life prior to his conversion and baptism.

“It is important to realize the *Confessions* is an autobiography in which the author has imposed a drastic, fully-conscious choice of what is significant” (Brown, 1967, p.169).

Thematic coherence in Augustine's story is therefore found in his underlying purpose of describing his pilgrimage inwards towards greater self-knowledge and knowledge of God. Augustine seeks to illustrate a process of conversion to Christian belief through his own experience, which he believes will be the same for other seekers after truth. The strategies that he uses to construct his new Christian self-identity provide the elements of my conceptual framework and the structure of key themes under which I present my research analysis.

Using the poetry of RS Thomas

The work of the twentieth century poet-priest RS Thomas is used as a counter-balance and contrast to Augustine. Thomas's poetry offers a different view of the themes reminding us that in theology, there are no final human words and no complete answers. Sallie McFague Teselle, in arguing for a new form of parabolic theology that links faith and action more closely, writes that theologians need to educate their sensibilities and that poetry offers a rich source for such theological reflection.

“It will not write their theology for them and it need not reduce them to silence if they are not themselves poets, but it can make them better able to distinguish between words that are dead and those that are alive. It can make them extremely cautious of an explicit, traditional vocabulary, of words that are simply clichés; it can make them responsive to all kinds of new and undreamt-of associations and juxtapositions in ordinary language, eager to use as ‘low’, hidden, and contemporary a vocabulary as they believe is illuminating of that other low, hidden, and contemporary story of long ago: the story of Jesus of Nazareth” (McFague Teselle, 1974, p. 638).

Within this project, with its emphasis on language and narrative, poetry becomes a powerful medium for exploring meaning.

The research actors

I use the term “research actors” for my research participants throughout this thesis. This term is inspired by Goffman's 1959 text – “The presentation of the self in everyday life” where he sees individuals seeking to present themselves in a way that allows effective communication between themselves and the world. The term “actor” implies a creative encounter within conversations and relationships and it suits the constructivist tone of this study.

The research project was carried out in my own workplace, a UK university, and the interviews took place over two semesters in the academic year 2006-07. The research uses purposive criteria and convenience sampling in its choice of research actors. Criteria for selection of actors were that they should have substantial experience of

both being Christians and being at work. In effect this meant that none of my interviewees was under thirty five years of age, the shortest length of time as a Christian was sixteen years and all had at least ten years experience in the workplace. All were also British nationals. The nature of the research meant that I was dependent on volunteers taking part and offering their time for interviews. However I was able to interview five women and five men who fulfilled all the criteria. Ten interviews of 90-120 minutes each produced sufficient data in transcripts and notes for narrative analysis which is a detailed and lengthy process. My sample of university staff covered a wide variety of employment within the university, including lecturers, librarians, student support workers, technicians and media support personnel. The lecturers worked within three different disciplines and one of them was a senior manager in her Faculty. Five of my interviewees had current managerial responsibilities. All participants were sent details of the research before the interview and were assured of anonymity throughout the research process. The research was subject to the university's research ethics guidelines and requirements and signed agreement was collected from each participant before the interviews. (See Appendix 1 for copies of Participant Information Sheet and Participant Consent Form). I was aware from the beginning that asking people to talk about their faith lives was likely to raise emotional responses. However, I was still surprised by the levels of emotion that I encountered and it is a testimony to the deeply held beliefs of my interviewees that they told their stories in such a manner. I believe however that the level of emotion is an indicator of the reliability of the data that I collected, showing the research actors' full identification with their narratives. It is sometimes advised in narrative research that the researcher should return to the interviewees with the analysis of the stories in order to collect further comment and data. Whilst this would have been a fascinating process for this study, the length of time between the two processes of interview and analysis, has made it impossible as several of my research actors have retired or moved away from the university.

A university is a very particular type of workplace within which to carry out a research project. (See also on “The institutional environment” in my Introduction). Certainly the academic members of staff amongst my sample of research actors have much experience of academic study and research issues and therefore are likely to adopt a careful, thoughtful approach to telling their work/faith stories. It is possible too that those working within a university will share similar value systems. Higher education is in a period of intense change in the UK but traditional academic values remain. Barnett notes that –

“the university seems unable to shake off its value inheritance and become fully modern: much as it embraces the outstretched arms of instrumental reason, production, utility, measurement and performance, so the university also hangs on determinedly to old-fashioned stories of collegiality, pure communication, independence and critique” (Barnett, 2000, p. 61).

Such deep-seated values influence the stories of my research actors and provide the background against which they construct their workplace identity. They are as well a minority group within the institution. Faith is very much a private matter. A recent article in the THE notes however that the pressure to bring international students to UK universities, and the current arguments between science and religion, has raised religious issues on universities’ agendas. Universities need to be places where intelligent and informed discussion can take place about faith issues.

“When it comes to religion, universities contain a fair number of people screaming loudly that they will not talk to each other. Fortunately, there are also plenty of quiet bridge-builders: religious believers who embrace science, scientists who practice their faith in private, agnostics who prefer discussion to abuse. The ideal is not a community of angelic academics ‘speaking heart unto heart’ but a forum where a basic respect for others’ views is combined with robust but informed argument. If that isn’t part of what universities should be about, it is hard to know what is” (Mroz, 2010, p.5).

My research actors represent some of those believers who take part in such discussions in their daily working lives.

Data collection

The data was collected in lightly-structured interviews where the interviewees were asked

“Please tell me the story of your life in the workplace as a Christian, reflecting particularly on any experiences and events that have been important for you in that story.”

Each interview was tape recorded so that the researcher was freed to listen carefully and pick up changes in emotion and tone. The method named “single question aimed at inducing narrative – SQUIN” (Wengraf, 2001, p.113) requires the researcher to listen without commenting to the interviewee’s story making notes only of key issues or events that are mentioned. When the story has been told there is a short break in the interview whilst the researcher forms some further questions out of the brief notes taken. These questions seek to elicit more story around the key events if possible. After the interview the researcher makes notes about the conduct of the interview, reflecting both on the interviewee’s emotional responses and on her own responses to the stories told. This immediate record of the tenor of the meeting as well as the transcript of the interview, provide the materials for analysis.

I chose this method of data collection because I wanted to allow my research actors as much freedom as possible in the construction of their narrative identities. I was very aware of my own known position as a lay chaplain to the university community and wanted to guide the interviews as little as possible, allowing the interviewees every chance to shape their own stories. Nevertheless, the power of the interviewer in the interview situation is acknowledged. Paget (1983) writing about in-depth interviewing with an artist about her painting says –

“Questions are powerful units of discourse. They constrain replies and replies in terms of the questions asked [...] What distinguishes in-depth interviewing is that the answers given continually inform the evolving conversation. Knowledge thus accumulates with many turns at talk. It collects in stories, asides, hesitations, expressions of feeling, and spontaneous associations” (Paget, 1983, p77-78).

She goes on to explore further her own role as interviewer.

“The specific person interviewing, the ‘I’ that I am, personally contributes to the creation of the interview’s content because I follow my own perplexities as they arise in our discourse” (Paget, 1983, p.78).

This does not mean however that questions are random – any series of interviews develops a systematic pattern of interest, but it makes the creation of the research actor’s narrative a joint work between interviewer and interviewee.

The results of the analysis of the interviews will show the quality of this method of data collection. After the interviews were completed I was aware that where the interviewee had experienced difficulties or blocks in constructing his or her story, I had tended to have more input into the conversation. Patterns of discussion emerged as similar interests and concerns appeared in different interviews. The interview method started out as a light framework intended to ensure standardization between interviews and it achieved this purpose. However, it became a dynamic method in practice as its open structure allowed my research actors and me to use it to suit each person’s individual needs. A more structured set of questions would have inhibited my interviewees and limited the personalization of the interview experience. Speaking about one’s faith in a secular setting can be a difficult or even threatening experience and I wanted my interviewees to be as relaxed and open as possible. There were surprises in the data I recorded which might not have been picked up by a more structured set of questions.

Within any interview method one encounters difficulties and weaknesses. My main difficulty with this method was allowing enough time between the first and second parts of the interview. Ideally there should be a break where the interviewer has space to consider the main themes emerging in the interviewees’ stories and create questions around these themes which are then asked in the second part of the session. My interviewees were all busy people taking time out from a working day

(sometimes an extended lunchtime) and I did not feel able to take a long break between the two halves of the sessions. I was able however to define key themes quite quickly and form questions reasonably effectively. At the beginning of the research process I carried out two pilot interviews with volunteer colleagues using the method and this gave me an insight into the timing difficulties and some practice at defining my questions. The two pilots were invaluable in showing me how to set the interviewee at ease (even with a tape recorder running), how to phrase my initial question and how long to allow silences between comments to last before giving some encouragement to continue the story.

Narrative analysis

The history of narrative analysis in the social sciences “is marked by a great diversity in methods and theoretical perspectives.” (Mishler,1995, p.87). Mishler develops a typology of models of narrative analysis identifying three general categories which encompass a variety of sub-categories as follows;

“Reference and temporal order: the ‘telling’ and the ‘told’;
Textual coherence and structure: narrative strategies;
Narrative functions: contexts and consequences, narrativization of experience: cognition, memory, self” (Mishler,1995, p.90).

The sociolinguists Labov and Waletzky were the first to apply a linguistic approach to oral narratives and are the classic example of the first category – identifying the ‘telling and the told’. They took the clause as their analytic unit and investigated the relationship between the sequence of clauses in a narrative and the sequence of events narrated. Labov and Waletzky concluded that in a normal form of narrative the following elements appear. An orientation section which sets the scene and explains the context to the listener (O), the main body of the narrative clauses which describe a series of events, the complicating action (C), an evaluation section that details the meaning of the action (E), a resolution element that resolves the action (R), and sometimes a

Coda which returns the verbal perspective to the present moment (Labov & Waletzky, 1967, p.37). The analysis of my data does not use Labov and Waletzky's particular framework as they are more interested in identifying cultural evidence from the structure of narratives rather than evidence of individual identity. However, I do break my interview transcripts down into clauses in order to analyse the dense material accurately.

Mishler's second category of textual coherence and structure is exemplified in the work of Agar and Hobbs (1982). Coming from a background of ethnographic research through life-history interviews, Agar and Hobbs are pioneers in the use of formalized methods of analysis in research on cultures. Discourse analysis and detailed conversational analysis form the basis of their method. Using a framework taken from artificial intelligence research where the relations between different parts of spoken monologues are being defined, they examine the structure of texts "in terms of the goals and beliefs of the speaker." (Agar and Hobbs, p.1, 1982) The analysis of the material begins with a close reading of the interview text, and an initial identification of possible themes by the researcher. Then coherence theory is applied to test and re-shape the first analytical process. The formal structure of coherence theory assists in a more objective appraisal of the research subject's set of beliefs, or his or her cognitive world. The researcher's subjective reaction to the narrative undergoes a more rigorous examination.

Agar and Hobbs identify three kinds of coherence in narrative texts derived from interview material. **Global coherence** refers to the overall plan that the interviewee has in telling his or her story. The story-teller will try to ensure that each element of the story contributes to the global themes. He or she is assumed to have a global narrative plan within which are goals and sub-goals in sharing understanding with the listener. The listener's responses indicate to the speaker whether his or her plan is going astray. The plan may then be modified during the exchange in

order to get back on track. In order to identify global coherence each utterance in the narrative must be analysed to see the role it plays in the narrative plan.

Local coherence refers to the linking within a text that gives continuity and meaning. This will sometimes be elaboration on a theme or telling what happened next. The speaker may also use discourse practices such as contrast, explanation and consequence in order to make the narrative meaningful. Local coherence can derail global coherence when anecdotes take the speaker away from the main thrust of a story. Similarly, local coherence can be broken when global themes suddenly take precedence.

Themal coherence refers to underlying assumptions in the narrative which may or may not be explicit. These provide threads throughout the narrative, such as cultural assumptions or evidence of beliefs or values being held. Themal coherence is recurrent in the text and gives it a unity.

Agar and Hobbs recommend micro-analysis of sections of transcripts. The first two elements of the coherence theory are applied to identify global and local coherence in terms of the speaker's beliefs and goals. When several parts of the transcript have been analysed then themal coherence begins to emerge. Themal coherence may recur in different forms throughout the text.

“These themes are beliefs, goals, or conversational resources or practices of the speaker, and we can use them to validate and modify our initial hypotheses about the structure of the text and the geography of the speaker's cognitive world” (Agar and Hobbs, 1982, p.9).

Mishler uses this method of analysis to illustrate how narrative can be used “to make sense as an identity-claiming story” (Mishler, 1986, p.244). Themal coherence identifies cultural and personal-social identity in a narrative. The method also relates closely to a text already mentioned - Erving Goffman's work “The presentation of the self in everyday life”(1959). Goffman argues that human beings are involved in

performances all the time, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously. We all take care to perform the correct roles in relevant circumstances.

“It is apparent that care will be great in situations where important consequences for the performer will occur as a result of his conduct” (Goffman, 1959, p.219).

Mishler claims that any personal narrative is also a “form of self-presentation, that is, a particular personal-social identity is being claimed” (Mishler, 1986, p.243). As this research is concerned with identifying evidence of Christian self-identity I use Mishler’s interpretation of Agar and Hobbs’ model of coherence theory to analyse my interview data.

Life story interviews create a large amount of data both to transcribe and analyse. The ten stories told in this research amounted to almost 50,000 words of transcript. I therefore considered using the computer analysis programme NVivo and spent some time uploading all my interview material into it. Firstly I investigated word frequency to see if particular words were being used repeatedly across the interviews. Apart from the words “I”, “you” “my” and “think” there were few words of significance which were being used by all my research actors. A search for phrases and themes also produced little cross-interview information. It seemed that each story was so different from the others that there was very little matching between them. I therefore decided not to use NVivo for detailed analysis but rather to concentrate on seeing each story as an individual identity-claiming entity. Coherence theory allows me to break down interview transcripts into “global” and “local” themes and thus sift the material to identify themal coherence and construction of self-identity.

As well as searching within the clauses and stories of the interviews themselves for evidence of claimed self-identity, I am also interested in investigating the way that the telling of the story of their working life in the interview setting affects my research actors’ presentation of their self-identity. In all the interviews I am conscious, as my research actors’

work/faith narratives develop, of the effect that telling the story is having on them. There is a growing sense as the interview progresses of their working life being seen as a continuous whole with threads of meaning being traced throughout. This I believe is partly because people have not thought about their working lives and their faith in these terms before and have often therefore not constructed such a narrative previously. This highlights the issue that

“narrative as research method is, therefore, less a matter of the application of a scholarly technique to understanding phenomena than it is a matter of ‘entering into’ the phenomena and partaking of them” (Clandinin and Connelly 1989, p.260).

I have a strong sense of participating with my research actors in a process of discovery about themselves as we construct their story together. The identity which they are building in their work/faith narrative is partly existent before the interview and partly realised as they unfold their story. To assist me in reflection on this second strand of identity – building I will use the “three dimensional narrative inquiry space” outlined by Clandinin and Connelly in their work *Narrative inquiry* (2000, p. 50). This model comes within the third strand of Mishler’s typology of forms of narrative analysis. It is concerned with the function of narrative and the narrativization of experience.

Clandinin and Connelly’s model is drawn from their work with teachers in schools in Canada. In order to carry out their research they became deeply embedded in the life of a particular school. Their work investigates school cultures and the development of teachers’ practice and to do this they analyse the school experience narratives of individual teachers. The model combines the elements of time, place, and personal/social experience (continuity, situation and interaction) and sets the narrative within this framework for analysis. Time in narrative is personal time involving memory, the present and looking forward imaginatively; place may be an expression of a particular experience as much as a physical location; personal and social experience expresses the dialectic within each life between the individual and the social.

Clandinin and Connelly base their model on Deweyian concepts of experience and Schon's reflective practitioner theory. John Dewey, educational theorist, developed a philosophy of experience which he believed should be the driving force behind children's education. He saw experience having a past-future structure, an "experiential continuum" (Dewey, p.33, 1938), which makes experience a key element in all physical, intellectual and moral growth. Donald Schon's reflective practitioner theory looks at practice in a variety of professions and defines the use of "reflecting in action" (Schon, p. 54, 1983). Schon sees this as challenging tacit acceptance of the way things have always been done and opening up possibilities for improving practice.

"When someone reflects-in-action, he becomes a researcher in the practice context. He is not dependent on the categories of established theory and technique, but constructs a new theory of the unique case" (Schon, p.68, 1983).

The reflective practitioner is one who learns from experience and practice, rather than from established theory.

The purpose of Clandinin and Connelly's three dimensional model is to capture narrative in a dynamic way so that it can be analysed and used by teachers in practice in a learning process. In this research I am using the model to capture the experience of the interview and identify, within the evolving narrative, threads of time, place and personal/social experience. In this way I can see how a particular thread of meaning holds the narrative together and contributes to the self-identity being portrayed in the interview setting. Combining the use of this method of analysis with the Agar and Hobbs' method of coherence analysis gives me a robust framework within which to identify themes and seek evidence of self-identity. The first method is formalistic and requires a breaking down of the material and attention to detail as it tests the researcher's initial reactions to and thoughts about the stories and their tellers. The second method is more dynamic and allows the interviews to be seen holistically with threads of meaning running through them giving clues to the self-identity being claimed.

Creating a research text

It has already been noted that creating a doctoral text from narrative analysis is a challenging exercise. Investigations of narratives tend to produce new meaning and significance in the areas of study rather than development of theory. Moreover, the very individualistic nature of each work/faith story in this study makes it difficult to justify presenting the analysis under highly defined categories or themes. My conceptual framework gives me a structure within which I can present my analysis of the stories in a meaningful way. Each construction of self-identity can be seen as individual yet can also be seen in relationship to the constructions of the other research actors. Both individual and shared meaning can thus be presented and discussed.

Methodological conclusions

“Only narrative form can contain the tensions, the surprises, the disappointments and reversals and achievements of actual, temporal experience (Crites, 1971, p. 306).

This research is concerned with capturing human experience in order to identify expression and construction of self-identity. Only autobiographical narrative provides a means for doing this effectively, and this study therefore adopts a narrative methodology for investigating the research questions. In this chapter I have explained the constructivist, qualitative approach taken in the study, as well as the participative role of the researcher in the process. I have outlined a robust framework for analysis of the research actors' stories, justified decisions on my research sample, and discussed issues of validation of research results. Finally, I have proposed a means for writing a doctoral research text, based on my conceptual framework which draws from St. Augustine's *Confessions* and the theory of self-identity construction. This framework enables me to honour the distinctive nature of each work/faith story and self-identity, whilst also identifying commonalities between the stories and identities.

Chapter 4 Analysis of the work/faith stories

Introduction : using the conceptual framework

The analysis of life-story research materials is challenging. The researcher wishes to both honour the personal and unique quality of each of her research actors' stories but also create from them convincing arguments in a research text. The narrative researcher wants neither to represent the actors "as exemplars of formal categories" nor to reduce them completely "downward to themes" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 141-143). In this research I want as far as possible to let each story speak individually about the self-identity issues disclosed, whilst I also offer some interpretation of the analysis that shows shared meanings across the stories where appropriate. My conceptual framework, developed in a synergy between my theoretical work and literature review on self-identity issues on the one hand, and my reading of Augustine's *Confessions* and related material on the other, gives me a structure which allows me to achieve this. Four threads which contribute to the narrative development of Christian self-identity are identified. These four threads have already been used to order underlying theory. Now they are used again to order the analysis of the narrative material.

The sections of analysis therefore mirror the theoretical perspectives and are again entitled - "Theories to unify self-identity", "Understanding myself: the journey inwards", "The quest for the happy (blessed) life: frameworks for living", and "Encounter, call and gifting : the self in relationship". Under three of the themes, three stories are grouped together – under the last theme one story stands on its own. The research actors' stories, presented separately but together within this framework, illuminate each other. Augustine's own experience as recorded in the *Confessions* and in *City of God* is also brought within the framework as contrast and comparison.

I begin each section of this analysis chapter by quoting briefly from the *Confessions* and from RS Thomas and then by explaining why I have

chosen to bring these three stories together. Next I work through the analysis of each story concluding with a comment on the claimed Christian self-identity as seen in the themal coherence (following Agar and Hobbs, 1982). Then self-identity issues are identified using the three dimensional narrative space (following Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Having discussed the stories in some detail I then turn to the *Confessions* and related Augustinian texts, and explore the linking themes in Augustine's theology. I show some connections and disconnections between Augustine's construction of his Christian self-identity as it appears throughout his narrative, and the constructions of my research actors as told in their stories. Finally I explore the way these stories illuminate the threads of my conceptual framework and show development of workplace spiritualities. I discuss further issues of meaning and significance in my Findings chapter.

Theories to unify self-identity

“You gathered me together from the state of disintegration in which I had been fruitlessly divided.” (Conf. II, i)

*“The scientist
brings his lenses to bear and unity
is fragmented.” (Thomas, 2004, p. 142)*

In three of the research narratives there is a strong sense of compartmentalisation of self-identity – a conscious separation of work and church/faitth identities. This compartmentalisation is adopted for different reasons by each individual and shows different results. I have chosen to discuss the analysis of these three stories together so that contrast and comparison can be made between them. I also set the stories against St. Augustine’s account of his sense of inner division so that connections and dis-connections can be explored.

Linda’s story is told against the background of nearing retirement. She reflects back on a long career working in academic libraries and a life-time as an Anglican Christian. Brought up in a church-going family, her education began in a church school which gave her a deeply engrained knowledge of “credences and litany”. After her marriage she had a short spell away from church attendance but following her divorce, returned and still attends the village church where her grandparents worshipped. Using Agar and Hobbs’ coherence analysis I identify the global plan of Linda’s narrative as an attempt to emphasise the way Christian belief underpins an ethical and positive outlook in the workplace. Explained in more detail in my methodology chapter, this method of narrative analysis shows coherence in an interview transcript through identifying global themes and a global plan for the teller’s story. Themat coherence in the narrative is then identified from the themes giving an indicator of the narrator’s cultural assumptions and beliefs. In this research themal coherence is being used to identify claimed Christian self-identity. In my initial response to this interview I noted that there was almost a naivety

about Linda's story. I was struck by the fact that life had been very painful for her at times and that she had got through difficult times by hanging on to the discipline of work and accepting an unquestioning Christian faith.

Linda's story has a moment of fracture in an early divorce whilst her children are still young. This experience of loss and pain colours the whole account. Her own confidence and stability are rocked and work becomes "a safety valve" – "it preserved my sanity". Anxiety becomes the background against which self-identity is constructed. For this reason the different aspects of her life are deliberately separated out.

"I'm sort of part of several threads- there's family life, there's church life, there's organisations that I belong to, there's work – and they all have a separate existence and when I'm in one I concentrate on that one". - "I know I need to keep work and home separate for my own safety."

A global theme of the story is Linda's consciousness of her own emotional limits and her need to protect herself. In a discussion about vocation, Linda recounts her desire to work with people in a "helping profession" whilst being unsure that she feels a particular call to librarianship. Again, her doubts about her own emotional resilience come through in the discussion.

"I don't have the capacity to work in social work or anything more personal or deeply engrained because I couldn't cope with it - I would be destroyed. I don't know how people deal with...some of the awful things that some people do."

Libraries are seen as an environment that neither challenges nor encourages Christian faith.

"Working in a library doesn't threaten my Christianity – it doesn't seriously impinge on it either except as a behavioural thing."

As a manager in the workplace Linda uses the legalistic and ethical framework of Christianity as an anchor for her self-identity. This is a strong global theme in the story. She tries to –

"encourage all members of staff to have an appropriate attitude to their working colleagues and to our library users."

Her own sense of justice and fairness feeds through into her dealings with students – “transgressors” (students who break the library rules) are all dealt with equally.

“I’m applying the rules and I have to apply the rules fairly which means telling everybody the same.”

Linda’s job as a manager sometimes entails confrontation with others and Linda admits that she dislikes disagreements and finds them distressing. In a discussion about dealing with staffing issues she tells of her personal preference for compromise rather than confrontation.

“Discipline is one of the parts of management that I find difficult to handle. I would much rather pacify or find an easy way round things.”

However, justice demands that staff who step out of line are made aware of their failings even if this is a painful process for her.

“I’ve now come to the conclusion that there are occasions when disciplinary action is the only way to resolve something - it’s always a last resort.”

The search for justice is carried through into the threads of her life beyond work. Her mother’s recent death after a long illness leads to a reflection on suffering. There is a strong hope that there will be a better, happier life in the hereafter.

“I trust in the fact that there is a God and that there is a life beyond what we know now and I don’t question that and I don’t delve into it or try to prove it. I want to believe its there – may-be I’m deluding myself, but I want to believe its there because there is more to life than what we are living – otherwise everything would be perfect and it isn’t - you see people suffering or going through difficult times and you think there has to be more to it than that.”

There is a deliberate and unquestioning adoption of this interpretation of the Christian faith narrative. This provides both a level of comfort in life’s difficulties and a theory for positive and hopeful living. The global theme of self-protection again shows in this interpretation of her Christian tradition.

Although Linda maintains that she is not a “natural manager” she nevertheless fulfils a management role in her local church (as

churchwarden) as well as at work. She speaks of coping because there are a set of rules to follow both in her church role and her work role. Her commitment to the parish church flows from an awareness of the historic nature of the church's mission in the parish for over 900 years and also from her desire to support a small group of Christian friends in the church community.

"We have enormous congregations for Christmas, Easter, christenings, funerals etc. and we have maybe a dozen or so every week that come for family membership of the church and they are the ones that keep it going for the sake of the festivals [...] my commitment to church is because I believe in it but I also appreciate the fact that I'm with a small group of people who have the same commitment and belief that I do. It's not something that you do for pleasure in that sense – it's something you do because you believe in it."

Linda feels no tension between church and work communities but also sees little connection. The two communities operate in separate spheres except when Linda participates in a chaplaincy prayer group at work. Here she feels the two worlds touch each other but she worries that such activity might seem strange to non-churchgoers.

"I do think people who aren't involved with formal worship, group worship, do find something like a prayer meeting a bit alien."

Thematic coherence in Linda's story is shown in the underlying anxiety about losing control over events. It is this anxiety that drives her need to compartmentalise the different areas of her life so that she can concentrate on one area at a time and give it her whole attention. The global themes of the story are Linda's need for self-protection, her strong sense of justice, loyalty to colleagues, the need to keep the rules, and a hope for a better and fairer future. All of these themes are underpinned by her understanding of the Christian faith – an understanding based on her church-based upbringing and education. Although her work and church lives are separated there is a sense in which the Christian-based theory for living which she has adopted applies across all the areas of her life. Her self-identity seems vulnerable, seeking comfort, yet determined to keep the rules and hang on to a hope for a more just and

painless future with God. This interpretation of the faith provides a sort of unity in identity across the divisions in Linda's life.

Clandinin and Connelly's three dimensional narrative analysis space of time, place and personal/social experience provides a second method of analysis in this research. This second method seeks threads of meaning which hold the story together. Analysing Linda's story within this framework the key threads of following the rules, seeking to be fair and just, commitment to friends and colleagues, and holding on to hope, are apparent in all the times and places. The continuum of time and place flows from childhood and school experience – through family, church and working life and on to an eschatological future with these beliefs underpinning her autobiographical narrative. The secure framework provides a bulwark against deep anxiety. It is tested through the fissure of divorce, the worries of family life, and workplace and church responsibilities, and is adopted as a basis for meaningful interpretation. Although her account of her life shows compartmentalisation, a kind of unity of identity is formed behind the fragmentation. In her story Linda's interpretation of her own tradition provides a theory within which she constructs unity in her identity. She recognises this as she concludes her account.

“So in a sense I suppose I compartmentalise my life – but I put elements of belief and faith, Christianity, into all of it – because it's there in me.”

Bill's story reflects the experience of a Pentecostal Christian. Working in the university as a lecturer Bill demonstrates a similarly compartmentalised identity to Linda but his story is driven by different forces. The global plan of Bill's story is an attempt to demonstrate how he has remained within his Pentecostal tradition almost in spite of the needs and pressures of the workplace. It is pragmatism which forces him to make a deep separation between his work and his faith identity. In my initial reflections after this interview I noted that the overwhelming impression left on me was of a huge tension in Bill's life between his Pentecostal upbringing and his way of being in the workplace.

Speaking of his early career as an assistant in a marketing office in London Bill explores this global theme in his story of the tension between his church upbringing and the reality of city life. Pentecostalism had banned going to the pub, drinking alcohol, going to the cinema but in the workplace relating to his young office colleagues demands some sort of compromise on these things. Bill speaks of adopting a halfway position on drinking –

“So going to the pub on Friday – its not so much having a Christian witness – it’s more a case of going there and thinking what do I do? You start off by drinking lemon and lime, or something like that but then it got to thinking I’ll have a shandy.”

Bill is aware of his own need to be popular and sociable. He links a similar episode at university when on a geography field trip he joins his fellow students in the bar thinking “Blow this, I’m not staying in my room.” There is a global theme in this interview in Bill’s insistence that although he takes care to inform colleagues of his Christian identity he is -

“not a tremendous proselytiser – I’m not ramming it down their throat.”

Yet in spite of sitting light to the rules of his church tradition Bill holds firmly to his Pentecostal roots. He attends an evangelical mega-church and runs study groups on weekday evenings in his own home. His story shows a global theme in his belief that the Christian’s relationship with non-Christians should be primarily one of witness through words. This duty to witness through words seems almost to be a limiting factor in his ability to relate to others at work. It suggests a paradoxical situation in which his Christian identity cannot be engaged in normal workplace conversation and relationship. The only way his Christian identity can be engaged is when the conversation involves spoken witness. Bill is conscious of this separation. He relates how his church asks its members to bring a friend along on Sunday. He notes -

“I haven’t got anyone to invite - the downside in one sense is I say – I live in a Christian sub-culture.”

Bill speaks of current sermons in his church on the New Testament story of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4). The story has been interpreted in this teaching as Jesus seizing an opportunity to speak to a non-believer and bringing that person, and others through her, to faith. Bill accepts his church's tradition that spoken witness is the perfect Christian way but admits that he fails to live up to that ideal. He goes on to describe a conversation with a colleague who had recently suffered a bereavement. In this situation he says that he was –

“pushing a bit, proselytising more than I would have done otherwise”

demonstrating his belief that people are more likely to come to faith in times of trouble and anxiety than at other times. Bill's personal interpretation of his church's expectation of spoken witness allows him to achieve a balance between the demands of his church tradition and the realities of the workplace environment.

A further example of compartmentalisation is shown in Bill's account of his daily prayer and Bible reading routine – fixed points in the day for prayer and reading three to four chapters of the Bible each day. Speaking of prayer he admits that he can only remember praying for a colleague on one occasion recently. He remembers attending a conference where delegates were encouraged to pray for the conversion of colleagues to the faith.

“Now I started that - but I wouldn't say I do that now.”

When asked whether his Bible reading stays with him during the day and informs his thinking he replies -

“Er no – you see I marked 1 Thessalonians 4:11 – Seek to live a quiet life – work quietly.”

This global theme links with the theme of witness and provides a justification for not speaking to others of his faith continually at work. He speaks too of his personality being unsuited to speaking of his faith to those he meets, but he continues to admire those who can evangelise in words.

“There were people I would hear about – they were a tremendous witness- they could talk to anybody. Well, that’s just not in me – that’s not my personality.”

Again pragmatism about his own needs and abilities overrides his duty to his tradition. The workplace self-identity is firmly separated from the church identity.

Thematic coherence in Bill’s story is found in the tension and divide between his church identity and his workplace identity. This produces a strong sense of self-justification in the story as he feels the need to explain how he deals with the evangelistic demands of his church in the workplace setting. Bill is aware of the division in his life and has adopted a pragmatic attitude to it, accepting that the demands of the two different arenas can never be reconciled. The global theme that provides the justification for and resolution of this divide is found in the adoption of the “quiet man” image of 1 Thessalonians 4:11. Through this compromise Bill is able to find a means to hold his self-identity together. It provides a theory for coping with the dual demands of church and work.

Analysis within Clandinin and Connelly’s three dimensional narrative space shows several different time/place phases within the story. His upbringing phase reflects a “separation theology” where world and church are seen in tension. His father, a Pentecostal minister “was always preaching – be separate – come out.” The experience of this tension remains the thread which dominates the construction of Bill’s self-identity and links his story and its times and places. Through university, first job, his early academic career and his current post Bill shows a growing awareness of the impossibility of succeeding in the workplace whilst adhering absolutely to the tenets of his faith and church tradition. He tells a story that reflects his ongoing and maturing interpretation of this underlying tension as he develops in relationship to non-believers. The identities that he constructs (work and church) are, in the story, held together on a pivot of compromise. The “quiet man” image of 1 Thessalonians 4:11, introduced towards the end of the story, justifies

Bill's pragmatic stance and provides a bridge between the two. The private, inner identity remains deliberately hidden whilst the public persona gains success in the workplace. There is no common language between the two and thus little opportunity for cross-communication. As he tells his story Bill is aware of the divide in his identity. Questioned about the "quiet man" image he responds - "Yes, I think it's making people aware but not pushing it." Another question – "But I think that is in quite a tension with your upbringing and church?" – "Yes, but I tend to ignore that!"

In some ways **Stan's story** is similar to Bill's but in Stan's story the separation of work and church life has not led to success at work. Stan seems to be in retreat from a workplace that he feels has rejected him. The global plan of Stan's story sets out to show how he believes Christian faith and behaviour ought to and could shape the workplace experience, and how he feels he has struggled to live up to his own high ideals. There is a strong sense of regret in Stan's story. After the interview I reflected that Stan was at a turning point in his life and so looking back very much forms the story. The present in Stan's life is in a state of flux as he changes his job and questions his church tradition. Stan speaks of an incredibly deep Christian commitment evolving from the church of his upbringing into something less definite but more challenging.

Stan belongs to the Seventh Day Adventist tradition, a Christian denomination noted for its legalistic and literal interpretation of scripture. He begins his story by stating that "Christianity I feel is quite an integral part of myself, who I am" and tells how this makes him mindful of his responsibility to act ethically and treat others with respect. Immediately however the issue that is the key global theme of the interview is introduced – "Treating others as a Christian – that can be difficult". It is Stan's continuous struggle to relate to colleagues in the workplace that underlies his story.

The time of the interview is a turning point in Stan's life. He has been teaching in the university for fourteen years and has decided to leave and change the whole course of his life. However, his future is still unclear and the consequences of his decision are as yet unknown. In the interview he looks back at his fourteen years telling a story of an increasingly secularised university environment and a corresponding withdrawal on his part from relationships with students and staff. A global theme is the sense of pain and bitterness in the story as Stan sees himself excluded over the years from promotion and collegiality. He reflects on this and tries to link Christian teaching to his experience –

“There's a side of me that says- 'You should respond, you should retaliate', and then the Christian side says 'well, you know, sometimes you have to suffer these things, it's part of the Christian journey – you know better than they do'.”

Stan tells a story of withdrawal from relationship in order to protect himself. He justifies this by passing judgement on the workplace environment –

“Christians generally in the media are portrayed as either irrational, mad or have general problems in their lives – so we are living in an environment that is very secularised and moving away from anything that is Christian or good.”

His prayer he admits has sometimes been for support and guidance in dealing with colleagues. The theme of difference and dissonance between the worlds of work and church is emphasised.

“If you think about Christians going to church – that can be a kind of false environment, everybody is nice. Now if you transfer the Christian from that environment and put him or her in a working environment where there's competitive forces, people don't like each other, there are pressures, you are being challenged left, right and centre on many things -So that's what I've found hardest I think - trying to forgive as we know we should do as Christians and to love as well.”

So, although knowing and understanding the principles of Christian love, Stan has found the practice of such a faith impossible in his workplace setting. He has taken a deliberate decision to separate and compartmentalise his work identity and his church identity. Stan adopts a workplace identity of withdrawal from and minimal participation in

academic life. His church identity is thus preserved intact as far as possible. As with Bill's experience, he finds there is no common language between the two identity worlds. The hermeneutical gap between the interpretation of the world offered in his church tradition and his interpretation of his experience of the workplace is too vast to be bridged. Stan has taken a path of withdrawal from socialisation and relationship with those around him at work in order to protect himself.

"I'm ok on my own and with a few close friends but I don't need to be part of a political group to feel who I am or who I need to be."

Only the Christian narrative of suffering for one's faith seems to make any sense of his experience.

As well as being at a point of change in his work Stan is also at a point of change in his church membership. His questioning of some of the doctrines of his tradition is a global theme in the story. He speaks of his current "emerging out of Adventism" and his search for a broader based faith. He has recently "read the Bible entirely through" – something he had not previously done – and this has given him a "greater picture of God". Stan offers a telling critique of a narrow, denominational approach to Christianity, suggesting that he now feels a need to explore a wider view.

"I think that a lot of churches are spiritual franchises and what I mean by that is that they teach a set of doctrines that they believe and that's all you can find out – so if you really wanted to explore the bigger picture its very difficult because a franchise will only sell the products they are licensed to sell."

Stan tells of expecting God to speak to him through his mind and through scripture and give him direction in his life. At this point of change he is waiting for God to make his will known to him.

"I mean now is a good test because I'm leaving the university. I haven't got another job to go to and it's in faith really. I've got to say 'what do you want me to do?'"

Stan does not feel that he had a vocation from God to be a teacher – but he does not know what his vocation might be. However, he believes that

God has a plan for his life and that God wanted him to be at the university –

“I think there were things God wanted to show me here maybe more about myself – but I think there was a plan.”

Thematic coherence is found in this story in Stan's sense of being at a huge turning point in his life. Through much of the story he looks back with a strong sense of regret about his experience in the university. He sees his negative behaviour and failure to relate to colleagues and students as an experience from which he can learn, but it seems as though Stan is speaking about a person in the past who has a separate identity to the real Stan in the interview setting and outside work. Stan has withdrawn from relationships at work in order to survive with his Christian self-identity intact. The present and future are uncertain, but there is an idealistic hope for a future where work and faith identity can be brought together.

“I think true Christianity is where you and I and everybody, take who we are into the workplace and we share – but it's not a separation – I go to church and this is me – I go to work and I'm a different person. That shouldn't be. There should be some continuity and some similarisation between who we are and who we say we are.”

Placing the interview within the three dimensional narrative inquiry space of time, place and experience there is seen to be a sense of unreality and uncertainty in the “now” of the interview. The past fourteen years in the university are reviewed from the point of view of faith and are judged negatively. Stan's early idealism in his work/faith relationship which led him to join the Christian Union, get involved in Chaplaincy and chat about faith issues with students, is seen to fade away. Disillusionment with the progress of his career and perceived prejudice from colleagues brings about a decisive break between church and work environments. It becomes impossible to transfer his ideals of Christian living into the work arena. Not only that – the church tradition in which he has been brought up fails to give him the tools with which to interpret his experience. Stan simply accepts that Christians may suffer and justifies his experience as

evidence of that. At the time of the interview, he seems to be in a no man's land with a changing theoretical knowledge of Christian living.

“I've ventured on a long journey recognising that Christianity is not doing things and having a set of rules etc. True Christianity is when God's Spirit resides within us.”

The thread that holds this story together is a sense of lostness and uncertainty in Stan's current self-identity, together with an unengaged, unearthed idealism. The crisis of church and work identity is perhaps part of a deeper psychological crisis around seeking meaning in his life. The story seems as yet incomplete.

Linda, Bill and Stan's stories show deliberate compartmentalisation of self-identity through a separation of work and faith/church personas. It is possible to compare this to the fractured self-identity seen in Augustine's story – the *Confessions*. Augustine also reports a sense of deep division in his self-identity between his inner and his outer life. On one level this division stems from his acceptance of the dualistic world view of his time – the physical as an imperfect shadow of the perfect world of the soul; the desires of the body signifying a deeper desire for the perfect One. Neo-platonism taught a doctrine of the soul's ascent away from the yearnings and distractions of daily concerns to a higher way of being in union with God. Influenced by this thinking Augustine is concerned to show through the *Confessions* the progress of his soul from error to truth, impurity to purity, division to unity. Even after his conversion to Catholicism he maintains in the *Confessions* a neo-platonic view of a Christian God. Describing a moment of vision shared with his mother Monica at Ostia shortly before her death, Augustine writes of their shared conversation and understanding ascending beyond the physical world to the eternal unity and wisdom of God.

“That is how it was when at that moment we extended our reach and in a flash of mental energy attained the eternal wisdom which abides beyond all things” (Conf. IX, x).

But Augustine regrets on this occasion and repeatedly in his story that ordinary daily life makes it impossible to remain in this place of

heightened awareness of God's presence. The dull reality of physical life always returns.

“If only it could last, and other visions of a vastly inferior kind could be withdrawn! Then this alone could ravish and absorb and enfold in inward joys the person granted the vision” (Conf. IX, x).

As well as being influenced by the ideas of neo-platonism, the Christian Augustine sees his inner division on a deeper level as a symptom of his weakness of will and vulnerability to multiple physical desires. He understands this as his inborn propensity for evil. It is Augustine's quest to comprehend the nature of evil that brings his sense of self-division into focus in the *Confessions*. He writes of Manicheism particularly appealing to him as a young man because it offers a creed that locates evil in external actions and forces, and preserves the inner purity of the soul. Then he tells of neo-platonism offering a more convincing understanding of his dilemma. Here evil is understood as simply turning away from the quest for the good. The inevitable human attraction to evil is controlled through ascetism and stern self-control. Although physical beauty is a spur to achieve the higher, inner life of the soul, bodily needs can be a distraction from the true quest. Thus, the Christian Augustine develops a paradoxical relationship with the physical world seeing it both as leading to God but also distracting the soul from single-minded love of God. This constant struggle creates a deeper experience of fragmentation of self-identity. In Book II Augustine speaks of his awareness of God calling him back into a unity of self-identity from the state of disintegration into which his youthful exploits had led him.

“You gathered me together from the state of disintegration in which I had been fruitlessly divided. I turned from unity in you to be lost in multiplicity” (Conf. II, i).

Here again the Christian Augustine shows the enduring influence on his thinking of the teachings of Plotinus, the great neo-platonist, who expounded the belief that -

“the purified soul, purged of all physical contact and all images of material things, is capable of achieving a union with God which is an experience of identity” (Chadwick, 1991, p. xxi).

Augustine's theory of neo-platonic Christianity therefore shapes his account of his conversion in the *Confessions*. He adopts a neo-platonic dynamic of body and soul, good and evil, that provides the lens through which he interprets his experience of fragmentation of self-identity throughout the narrative.

The stories of my research actors and their experience of fragmented self-identity show reflections of Augustine's experience. Though their sense of self-division arises from different causes, they too adopt a theory, a personal interpretation of their faith narrative in order to make sense of their experience. Harre, psychologist, speaking of "selves as active centres of experience" (1983, p.258), MacIntyre, philosopher, (1985) in his work on the narrative quest, and Giddens, sociologist, (1991) in his study of the reflexive self, agree that the adoption of a theory, a coherent interpretation of one's beliefs for one's own life – is the basis for development of a secure and unified sense of self-identity. In theological terms such a theory could be called a personal theology – an interpretation of one's own relationship with and understanding of God. In Linda's story she reveals an interpretation of Christian faith (following set rules and hoping for justice) which enables her to unify her self-identity in spite of a deliberate separation of the areas of action in her life. In each area of her life she adopts the same principles of interpretation. Similarly, Bill has a theory – an interpretation of his church/work tension based on compromise and pragmatism and justified by the scripturally based "quiet man" image – which enables him to establish a somewhat uncomfortable dualism in his self-identity. Bill is able to operate within this theory and hold the two worlds of his experience together. In Stan's story however there is a break down in the interpretation of the work/church relationship. Survival of Christian identity is achieved through a deliberate withdrawal from relationship with the workplace setting. There is no satisfactory theory established which can hold the two worlds of Stan's life together in practical terms, although Stan is well aware of Christian ethics and teaching. He accepts that Christians may suffer in the secular world but he has so far struggled to

reach an understanding which allows him to experience a unity of self-identity across both work and church settings.

For Augustine in the *Confessions* the thread of neo-platonic Christian theory is, as in my research actors' stories, an interpretation of identity made in the present but looking back through memory to past events - Olney's "processual model" (Olney, 1993. p.857) of memory. The reader or hearer of the story needs to be conscious of different levels of interpretation within the narrative. Firstly there is the relating of the memory with its remembered details, and then there is the interpretation of the memory in relation to the faith narrative or theory within which the individual is constructing his or her self-identity. So, in Augustine's story there are many examples of memories recounted and then re-interpreted according to his theory of neo-platonic Christian doctrine. For example, the famous story of the theft of the pears in Book II is told very briefly as a factual memory, but the interpretation of the memory fills the rest of the Book. Here Augustine's fall from grace reflects the neo-platonic view of the cosmos.

"I loved my fall, not the object for which I had fallen but my fall itself. My depraved soul leaped down from your firmament to ruin" (Conf. II, iv).

Augustine continues his interpretation of this relatively minor incident with lengthy reflections on the fatal attractiveness of physical beauty and goods, the poverty of human pride and ambition, and the dangers of unsuitable friendships. He cannot understand his immature self as he looks back – so he interprets his experience through his personal theology and concludes -

"As an adolescent I went astray from you, my God, far from your unmoved stability. I became to myself a region of destitution" (Conf. II, x).

In the research interviews there are equivalent examples of memories recounted and then memories interpreted within the adopted theory or theology of self-identity. Linda remembers her mother's final illness before her death and her own sense of mental anxiety at the time. It is

not the memory of the death that causes the pain but the suffering before death.

“What I found difficult to handle was the fact that she was so ill before she died and you feel so helpless because you feel there should be something that you could do more than you did, somebody should have been able to make life a little easier. Because we have got a life to live, there’s no reason it has to be hard, there’s no reason why we can’t make life reasonable.”

Linda then immediately goes on to interpret her anxiety and distress through her own personal understanding of the Christian narrative – her own theory.

“If we can’t (*make life reasonable*) then we have to assume that the hereafter is going to remedy that and be that much better.”

Her hope for justice and a sense of comfort from the belief in a better world hereafter, provides meaning in an otherwise meaningless situation and helps her to deal with the anguish that threatens disintegration of her own identity.

Bill’s theory of workplace/faith self-identity based on compromise and pragmatism is not fully revealed until late in the interview when he speaks of his adoption of the “quiet man” image of 1 Thessalonians. However the theory is revealed in several stories where memories are recounted and then interpreted. Speaking of his first job in London Bill says -

“They played squash at lunchtimes. And the other thing they did – and I suppose this is a minor thing but it really shows where I’m coming from I guess- is that every Friday people went down the pub. Now my upbringing had been – you don’t go to the pub, you don’t go to the cinema - you know it’s the old Christian sanctification thing - so going to the pub on Friday – it’s not so much having a Christian witness. It’s more a case of going there and thinking ‘what do I do?’ - I’m sure that I would have made people aware that I was a Christian, but not really then - but I’m not one to really push that in any great sense.”

The uncomfortable tension between his work identity and his faith identity is illustrated in his question to himself “What do I do?” and his answer justifies his past concealment of his Christian upbringing with his current theory – “I don’t push it”. His present-day interpretation of his

faith/work identity dilemma offers a satisfactory way of finding meaning in his past behaviour.

Stan's story shows a struggle to forge links between his workplace and his faith identity. His lack of a working theory or personal interpretation of his faith for the workplace is shown in various memories recounted. Remembering his early career at the university he tells of joining the Christian Union but not maintaining his links with the student society. His withdrawal from this contact is seen as a "low point" looking back but his explanation of his withdrawal from relationships in the university is blamed on the secularisation of students. They lose touch with him – rather than he with them.

“Sadly as time has gone on I’ve found that more students are secularised and tend to be non-believers – so it means it’s quite difficult – it’s difficult being a lecturer to openly share your faith.”

Apart from trying to behave in an ethical fashion and accepting that Christians may suffer in the secular environment, Stan has developed no further personal theology for holding his work and faith identities together. His strategy has largely been one of isolating himself in order to avoid the struggle to align work and faith identities. His current interpretation of his past situation gives meaning to his sense of increasing isolation and justifies, in his own eyes, his withdrawal from workplace relationships.

Although autobiographical stories have global themes running through them, there are usually particular remembered experiences which seem like revelatory moments and which critically shape the personal theory of belief of the individual and thus the narrative identity. For Augustine one of these moments is the early death of a close friend- an experience recounted in Book IV of the *Confessions* and previously mentioned in my theoretical perspectives chapter. Looking back at his overwhelming grief in this bereavement Augustine first remembers his experience and then interprets it from his present day viewpoint according to his personal theory.

“I was in misery and had lost the source of my joy [...] I was surprised that any other mortals were alive, since he who I had loved as if he would never die was dead” (Conf IV, v-vi).

Then Augustine offers his interpretation of his grief –

“For wherever the human soul turns itself, other than to you, it is fixed in sorrows, even if it is fixed upon beautiful things external to you and external to itself, which would nevertheless be nothing if they did not have their being from you. Things rise and set: in their emerging they begin as it were to be, and grow to perfection; having reached perfection, they grow old and die [...] That is the law limiting their being” (Conf. IV, x).

Augustine turns to Plotinus in order to interpret how beauty can distract one from God. The bereavement is a key, revelatory moment in his story because it provides an opportunity to emphasise a global theme of learning to love God above all else. This story helps to illustrate how Augustine develops his neo-platonic Christian theology into his later theology of “two loves” in *City of God*.

Similar revelatory moments can be seen in my research actors’ stories. For Linda the experience of divorce is the event which leads to the development of her current theory of belief. She sees the divorce as unjust and unwanted on her part. Thus her interpretation of her childhood learning in a church school about keeping the rules of Christian living, and the hope of rightness and justice under God’s rule in an eschatological future, provide a framework within which she constructs an identity that can withstand the anxieties stemming initially from the divorce. This interpretation of her faith can be applied in all the different areas of her life and gives continuity within the compartmentalisation which is adopted to avoid conflict. For Bill the moment of revelation is the adoption of his personal interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 4:11 “Let it be your ambition to keep calm and look after your own business.” (New English Bible) – seek to live a quiet life. Scripture, the foundation stone of his Pentecostal tradition, thus provides a rationale for his theory of belief built up through pragmatism and necessity– the separation of work identity and faith identity leading to separate but satisfactory development in both areas, and an uneasy relationship between the two.

In Stan's story the theory offered by his church tradition has so far failed to enable him to find a comfortable or workable Christian self-identity in the workplace. However, he is at the beginning of developing a new personal theory or theology based on his own interpretation of his faith. The idealism of Stan's hopes gives his story an air of unreality but he is at a turning point and a point of decision in his life. Stan's relationship with the world and his new Christian self-identity are under construction. The revelatory moment is perhaps just happening.

Analysing Linda, Bill and Stan's stories through the lens of spirituality offers a further dimension in understanding their Christian self-identity. With the emphasis on compartmentalisation of identity in these stories, how far does the research actors' spirituality, or response to the mystery of God in their lives, enable them to attain to some sense of unity in self-identity? I have shown already in this section how Augustine's neo-platonic/Christian spirituality enables him to develop a sense of self-unity through interpretation of God's action in his fragmented experience. His interpretation of memories of his deepening relationship with God allows him to make meaning from his experience, thus stilling his internal chaos.

Linda's spirituality is grounded in her loyalty to her parish church and the traditions of her Anglican upbringing. Prayer belongs in the church section of her life but her Christian ethics and hope for justice extend across all her multiple identities, providing a kind of unity in the diversity. Linda enables God's action in the workplace through her sometimes courageous stand for fairness and goodness. Her God is a God of justice and comfort in suffering. She accepts the authority of church and tradition, finding in this an anchor of certainty in an anxious world.

Bill's Christian self-identity is formed in a Pentecostal spirituality which draws a dividing line between the holiness of God's people and the unholiness of the world. Consequently Bill has difficulty in bringing the worlds of faith and work together holistically in his self-identity. This

shows in his admission that although he prays daily at set times, he seldom prays for workplace colleagues or situations. Bill's response to God tends to be confined to his church activities. His duty as a Christian in the world is to evangelise, but response to such a demanding duty cannot be aligned with workplace success. His tradition of spirituality is therefore more of a hindrance than a help in his struggle for self-unity.

Similarly Stan finds the spirituality of his Adventist upbringing and tradition unhelpful in his search for unity in self-identity. However, he is now questioning this restrictive spirituality as he feels the need for a "greater picture of God". Stan shows in his story a deep faith in God's presence and action in his life. It is this faith that upholds him as he prepares to change his life, leave his job and seek God's will for his future. His interpretation of his difficult experience in the university is twofold – first, God was trying to show him something about himself in the experience, and secondly, Christians should expect to suffer for their faith. Stan is developing a deeper spirituality as he discovers more about himself and about God.

Understanding myself : the journey inwards

"With you as my guide I entered into my innermost citadel, and was given power to do so because you had become my helper."(Conf. VII, x)

*"....nothing but the self
looking up at the self
looking down, with each
refusing to become
an object...." (Thomas, 2004, p. 214)*

In three of the interviews there is particular evidence of Giddens' concept of the construction of self-identity as a "reflexive project" - that is a process of sustaining "coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives" (Giddens, 1991, p.5). These three stories show high levels of development in self-awareness as their narrators turn inwards, finding over time and through experience fresh ways to know themselves, interpret their church traditions, and construct authentic Christian self-identity.

Mark's story is the fruit of a long career as a teacher of nurse education in the university. A cradle-catholic, his story reveals a global plan which shows how his understanding of the way his working life and his Christian faith inter-relate has developed over the years. But his narrative is uneven – it shows a host of paradoxical feelings – self-acceptance and shame, being in control and being vulnerable, grasping freedom and being fearful. There is a strong sense of a journey towards self-knowledge alongside a growing personal faith. There is above all a search for a sense of authenticity in self-identity. In my initial notes after this interview I reflected that here is a faith that has been worked out in suffering and self-examination.

A global theme of Mark's story is one of personal growth and understanding through suffering. As a young man in his early nursing career he is confronted by real human suffering. He recounts how this

made him re-assess the faith of his upbringing for the first time in relation to his work. Later as he specialises in psychiatric nursing he tells of ethical dilemmas in dealing with people with severe mental health problems –

“People would often put you on the spot and say – in the middle of a psychotic episode- ‘will you pray with me?’ Am I reinforcing their psychosis praying with them? Where do I stand as a Christian? So that was a dilemma that I went through on more than one occasion.”

In his own life Mark tells of experiencing real difficulties and tensions because of his “addictive personality.” For some years he struggled with and survived alcohol dependency. This experience has given him a deep awareness of his own weaknesses and dependencies – and forced him to develop self-acceptance in self-knowledge. As an academic Mark has approached his problems and his faith through reading and study. His personal theology now revolves around a spirituality of imperfection, a way of faith taught particularly by the Dutch theologian, Henri Nouwen. Hernandez writes of Nouwen –

“His commitment to pursuing integrity spoke more about his heightened awareness of his fractured human condition than any obsessive drive for perfection. Nouwen’s integrative pursuit of the spiritual life never obviated but instead incorporated facets of psychological, ministerial, and theological imperfections. For Nouwen, integration coexisted with the glaring realities of imperfection” (Hernandez, 2006, p. 75).

Mark says –

“I had to embrace my imperfection and just to accept it”,

but he recognises too a deep dichotomy in his self-identity.

“This is what I am and God celebrates it and I have to celebrate that – and that’s me talking rationally about it – Mark who experiences that on a gut level just feels shameful and guilty.”

There is the intellectualised identity that reasons for self-acceptance – and there is the identity shaped by a deeply engrained upbringing within the Catholic tradition that feels shame. Between the two is an ongoing tension and this tension is a global theme in the story.

Mark's theological studies have enabled him to interpret the Catholic narrative of his childhood and construct a Christian self-identity in the workplace that links the threads and experiences of his life in a rational and meaningful personal autobiographical narrative. His ideal is that there should be no separation between his self-identity at work and his faith identity.

"It's impossible to not be a Christian at work, otherwise you are just a Sunday Christian and what's that? – It's a nothing – there can't be a separation."

Mark currently belongs to a big Catholic Church and plays an active part in church life. He yearns for a sense of authentic church community which he has found in the environment of shared theological study but not in his own church. He speaks regretfully of a lack of a feeling of belonging in his church community.

"On a personal level my biggest sadness in terms of my experience of church is the loss of this real sense of community. Although I'm in a big, active church, it's sort of social activity doesn't really touch your soul."

For Mark, being a Christian at work encompasses every aspect of life. However, whilst insisting that "everything you do has an ethical dimension" and that evangelism happens by "osmosis" rather than through speaking of one's faith, Mark admits that he often feels that his example of Christian living in the workplace is flawed.

"I do feel that I let the side down a bit – I'm very conscious of the fact that I swear - that can scandalise people can't it."

Again this global theme in the interview shows a very real tension between the intellectual understanding of how his faith should appear to others and the reality of his behaviour.

Mark interprets vocation to mean being authentically himself wherever he is.

"Basically my Christian function is to be as much Mark as possible wherever I am, whatever I'm doing."

He rejects the idea of God having a fixed plan for each person's life.

“I think his plan for me is here you are Mark – here’s a life, now live it.”

This liberal interpretation of vocation brings conflicts with the “whole lot of injunctions” that are linked to his Catholic upbringing.

“I used to believe it and fear was a big part of my life as a cradle Catholic and I think a lot of my basic, primal fears come from these roots - but I suppose today I feel a bit more free from all that – not completely – and I try to free up other people too.”

Authentic living also brings tensions in the workplace. How much of oneself is it safe to disclose to students and colleagues? Mark recognises that it would be unprofessional to disclose too much of one’s weaknesses and problems to students but maintains that -

“sharing vulnerabilities, sharing your common humanity, sharing your values, what’s important to you and why, when it’s appropriate – that’s fair enough.”

Sharing faith concepts with colleagues is a problem however. A lack of a common language between theological insights and workplace reality means communication is difficult. Reflecting on the current conversation and its topics, Mark reflects -

“I wouldn’t share this with colleagues – they wouldn’t understand what I was talking about.”

The question of how to relate to others at work is again intellectualised and interpreted through Mark’s theological study –

“In a sense the Christian at work role would be that of accompaniment – it’s being there with other people – living your life as authentically as you can and experiencing it with other people and where appropriate helping people to articulate that in some way.”

Thus the search for a common language in which to help others express their sense of self-identity and values, becomes a key part of the Christian vocation.

Thematic coherence is found in the paradoxes and tensions shown in Mark’s story. Academic and theological study has given him the tools with which to interpret his experience and make sense of it. Faith and

failure are rationalised on one level. However, on another deeper level, perhaps connected with his Catholic upbringing, Mark is assailed by doubts and guilt about his Christian performance. His workplace Christian self-identity is therefore seen on the surface as academic and rational whilst underneath it is intensely vulnerable and fragile. Mark uses the narrative of a spirituality of imperfection to help him live with these tensions and construct an authentic, unified self-identity.

Analysing this interview within Clandinin and Connelly's three dimensional narrative space of time, place and experience it is the maturing construction of self-identity in the story that dominates. It is Mark's growing awareness of himself through the times and places, the social and personal experience – his increasing awareness of his own needs and weaknesses – that provides the recurrent driver in the story. Mark takes his own Catholic tradition and critiques it – finding through his theological reading ways to interpret that narrative and give it meaning in his life. As Giddens writes, stability is only possible -

“if the person is able to develop an inner authenticity- a framework of basic trust by means of which the lifespan can be understood as a unity against the backdrop of shifting social events” (Giddens, 1991, p.215).

Recounting the turmoil of addiction and the challenges of a long career path in mental health nursing, Mark constructs a picture of a Christian self-identity that can withstand the questions raised in his own growing self-awareness. He knows himself - his weaknesses and his strengths, his own inner division – but through an intellectual understanding of a spirituality of imperfection, his interpretation of his faith, Mark finds self-acceptance and a unity of self that enables him to feel authentic in his Christian self-identity in the workplace.

Anne's story shows many similarities to Mark's story. She too works as an academic in the university. Again her original Anglican faith identity and narrative have been re-interpreted through time and experience in order to find personal meaning as she has grown in self-knowledge. The

global plan of Anne's story is to illustrate how during her adult life her faith has changed -

“from this traditional, stereotypical, nice, comfortable – to actually messy, you don't need to have a label on it, but you are more certain about the core.”

The structure of the story is a series of illustrations of her point drawn from her working life experience. There is a global theme in the interview of anger against establishment structures and stereotypes. Anne sees established Anglicanism as a restricting rather than empowering force.

“We are carrying round a kind of overcoat that's past its sell-by date and people say it doesn't fit me – well, no, it doesn't fit many people actually and a lot of people are a bit too frightened to give it to the Oxfam shop you know, and what we are doing is really stifling ourselves.”

In my initial reflections after this interview I noted that Anne's story is the fruit of a long, intense personal journey.

Anne's long career started with working for the UN. She then moved to nursing and hospice nursing, then to working with disadvantaged children, and finally to lecturing in the university. She is a senior member of academic staff who often travels overseas to represent the university, and she is a local magistrate. The challenges of her career path, as well as facing a potentially life-threatening illness, have forced her to come to terms with her own needs and desires. A strong sense of justice combined with a questioning spirit has led her to construct an autobiographical narrative of Christian self-identity that radically interprets and critiques the tradition of her upbringing. Speaking about her experiences as a magistrate she notes –

“I think my faith has been challenged not by the apparent evil that people do, but by the absence of Christianity that has resulted in them acting this way.”

Anne goes on to criticise what she sees as the failure of the church to engage with ordinary people –

“There is an angry bit of me that feels we've got it wrong – all these labels. Its about goodness, its about love, its about understanding – people recognise goodness but they don't want

to go into a funny building where people put on funny voices with a holier than thou kind of approach.”

This global theme of anger at the Anglican church is again reflected in her story of her illness. Anne is disappointed at the lack of support offered by her parish church.

“I experienced a lot of negative feelings towards people who had been very good Christians supposedly but who couldn’t even be bothered to ring up and say ‘Hi – heard things are a bit tough – can I give a hand?’”

Anne’s illness is a moment of revelation in her story. It confirms her opinions about the established church, and also changes her view of God.

“I always thought that when you had something terribly wrong with you, you found God and felt strengthened by it. It didn’t work like that – it was me on my own – and you think well, may be the strength is within me and I have to look inside me. It’s like learning – only you can do the learning.”

Anne adopts an understanding of relationship with God which no longer needs the structures of church and formal worship but depends on an inner core of self-knowledge and self-acceptance. It is a personal theology, influenced heavily by her experience of Buddhism in Asia, which offers a way to unity of self -identity through finding God within.

“I am here and God is inside me – so the more I integrate with myself, the more I am at peace with the world and integrated with God – because it’s not separate.”

Anne’s experience of serious illness also helps to reinforce her sense of vocation to nursing and in particular to nursing the dying. In spite of currently being a senior academic in the university Anne sees her true vocation in the care of the terminally ill.

“That is something that I know I’m really good at and which I really enjoy – I do believe in vocation.”

She sees this care of the dying as a perfect form of Christian work bringing together true Christian compassion and love with work skills.

“People need to be cared for, they can’t do it for themselves, so acknowledging that helplessness of someone, and at the same

time their dignity and their respect and their individual identity – all of that is just fabulous really.”

There is a global theme in the interview in Anne’s concern to show that the practical outworking of Christian love in compassion for those who are damaged or dependent is the heart of her Christian faith.

Thematic coherence in this interview is achieved through Anne’s continual return to the thread of resisting religious stereotypes in language and behaviour, and her anger that such stereotypes prevent many people from coming to faith. Her intellectual approach to her faith has enabled her to interpret the tradition of her upbringing and question those things which she sees as excluding people. Compassion and a desire for justice are global themes. The story is of a journey towards self-knowledge and self-acceptance as well as towards God. Anne’s self-identity is constant across all the aspects of her life based on her belief that God is found within. In her story this sense of constancy and strength in her adopted self-identity seems to enable her to accept the failings of others and maintain good workplace relationships with colleagues, whilst remaining true to her own sense of justice and righteousness.

Within the three dimensional narrative analysis space of time, place and experience, it is the constant interpretation of experience, and in particular of the experience of injustice and suffering, that provides the thread that holds the self-identity in the story together. There is a sense of awakening from a traditional Anglican upbringing. The story seeks to show that questions about justice and relevance have shaped Anne’s developing sense of faith identity. There is anger as she regrets the inability of the church to speak a language that people in the world can understand. A loss of belief in outward symbols, observances and traditions is accompanied by an inward turn to find peace and meaning within herself. Telling her story allows Anne to explore a concept of an inner unity of self-identity created in the midst of a fragmented and busy workplace experience. Yet the workplace is also seen as a place of

God's presence. Although Anne claims at the beginning of her story that her beliefs are messy and uncertain, her account develops a distinctive faith identity based on her interpretation of the Christian narrative and her experience.

Jane's story again shows an intellectualised approach to her faith although her opening words in the interview are that she is -

“not as professional a Christian as other people that you might have talked to. I don't have any deep theological understandings to offer you.”

At the time of the interview Jane is a senior manager in the university with responsibility for a large department, yet the global plan of her story is to show that her faith is a simple and intensely private one dependent on traditional written sources and family relationships, and worked out in an ethical approach in the workplace. Jane's story shows a Christian identity still under consideration and construction. It is, like Mark's story, an account of an ongoing journey towards self-knowledge and self-expression, with paradoxical elements and unresolved issues. In my initial reflections on this interview I noted my surprise at the levels of emotion shown since Jane is a senior academic.

Jane's professional biography is dominated by the theme of her initial reluctance to become a teacher and then her surprise at her success in the profession, and her eventual realisation that this is what she wants to do and what she is good at doing. Her swift rise to management levels in Higher Education is underplayed in her account but her professional identity is shown to be one of determination, ability and competence. Jane's faith story begins with a solid high Anglican upbringing, followed by a period away from regular church attendance during her early career. She is drawn back to faith through her son's C of E school and chaplain but insists-

“I think it's the SMSC aspects as we call it in the National Curriculum – the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural aspects – that I'm into rather than feeling a profound existential contact with God.”

Jane does not currently belong to a local parish church community although she worships at a variety of Anglican churches and cathedrals as she frequently travels around the country. In spite of this, a global theme in the interview is Jane's living relationship with the traditional liturgies of the church and scripture.

"I pick up Books of Common Prayer and I always have a copy of the Authorised Version (*of the Bible*) on my desk, and if I'm going to a meeting which is I know going to be challenging, I have a read through."

It is not that Jane expects necessarily to find guidance in this reading but rather a sense of perspective in her work.

"I find it contextualises what we do, puts things into order, and stops you realising- thinking that this is really critically important. Of course it's important but half the world is starving and people are horrible sometimes and they shouldn't be."

For Jane the words of the liturgies and scripture represent perfection and a benchmark ideal for living. She convicts herself of falling short of this liturgical perfection, repeating in the interview that she feels she uses Christianity –

"Its terrible really isn't it because I suppose I make use of it – I'm horrible."

Throughout the interview high levels of emotion are shown. At one point as tears threaten to overwhelm her she admits that -

"These are terribly difficult things to talk about you know – it's not easy – it's all at the core of one's being."

Her emotion seems to run counter to her assertion that it is the SMSC aspects of religion that appeal to her. The emotion is linked to a global theme of using other people's words to express her faith identity rather than her own. As Jane seeks to express what is at the "core" of her being she finds herself almost unable to speak in a language of her own. There is a sense in which the traditional language liturgies give her a means to express herself, whilst also creating a distance between her commitment to Christian belief and the reality of workplace experience.

A discussion about vocation reveals that Jane has a strong sense of calling to teaching describing vocation in words used by her son –

“God guides your life in the way your parents do – you know they don’t tell us directly that you should do this but they provide a framework and support.”

She sees her management role as “part of service really” and even good budgetary management as “part of service, part of mission”. In a difficult, confrontational interview with a member of staff Jane reports sitting there thinking -

“What would Jesus do?” “I think he’d be patient – but I can’t get in touch with the Jesus who overturned the tables in the temple – I can’t get in touch with that angry side.”

Jane sees the manager’s role as one of taking responsibility for everything and interpreting demanding directives from above for her staff in order to try to prepare and protect them. In some ways Jane’s Christian self-identity at work is one of suffering and self-sacrifice. It is a largely hidden identity under normal circumstances but in the setting of the interview the level of emotion is perhaps a sign of the cost of senior management to the interviewee. Again the use of liturgical materials and scripture as a source of inspiration and comfort suggests an attempt to align the workplace identity with the perceived perfection of faith identity at some personal cost. Jane seems unaware that this costly giving of self comes close to what many Christians might see as faithful, sacrificial living. Her interpretation of her own experience seems to have not yet fully aligned her personal narrative with the Christian narrative tradition. Whilst her journey inwards is constructing a narrative of self-knowledge she has not yet aligned herself with any elements of the tradition which commend self-sacrifice or allow for self-acceptance. Jane does not currently belong to a local church and this also may stem from her fear of failing to find her hoped for perfection in a real church community. She speaks of a former research project which required her to visit church communities in the north-east of England and of being shocked as parishioners “slagged off the vicar”. Such human conduct does not fit with Jane’s view of faith as the way of perfection.

Thematic coherence in this interview is shown in two strands. Firstly there is the professional academic and manager identity, sure of her own abilities and the management style that she wishes to adopt. Secondly there is a personal, family and faith identity which is largely hidden in the workplace, yet is a powerful influence on Jane's behaviour. High ethical standards are expected both of her staff and herself, and the failure to achieve these causes much personal pain. Jane measures her faith identity against the traditional liturgies and scripture of the Anglican church, using these words to express the "core of her being". There is a division in Jane's workplace identity between the outer and the inner life as inner convictions judge outer achievements and the emotion of this interview tells of the pain experienced in holding these two identities together. Jane's personal narrative of self-identity shows an ongoing search for unity in the midst of fragmenting influences.

Within the three dimensional narrative analysis space of time, place and experience Jane's story shows a particular appreciation of her Christian belief fitting within a greater and longer tradition of faith over time. Her engagement with the foundational documents of the Anglican church gives her a historic and global perspective on her Christian self-identity. She sees herself as one small, unworthy fragment in a much larger and more impressive picture. Relying on the traditional words of the church in scripture and in liturgy she uses them to find comfort, support and benchmark values in her workplace world. Paradoxically, although using the words of the church Jane does not belong to a particular Christian community. Her Christian community is an imagined ever-present, historical and worldwide community rather than a particular local one. Her story shows her Christian self-identity in her working world as hidden, internalised, idealised and yet emotionally powerful. Her internal faith narrative does not find a contemporary language through which it can come to full expression in the every day world of work. The story shows a painful dissonance in Jane's life, evidenced by the emotion of

the interview, between the reality of workplace experience and identity, and a yearning for idealised Christian experience and identity.

The idea of the construction of self-identity being a reflexive project implies a turning inwards to understand and know oneself. Giddens speaks of self-identity as-

“not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by the individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography” (Giddens, 1991, p.53).

It is this understanding of self-identity developing in a personal narrative that is partially caught in the snapshot stories in the research interviews. The stories reflect the self-understanding that has been developed by the research actors so far and thus their claimed self-identity. In the *Confessions* it is perhaps the story of Augustine’s conversion to the Catholic faith in Book VIII that shows most clearly how the writer finally comes to understand himself. Here he finds the language in which to justify, express and define his self-identity. Augustine’s difficulty is a divided will – a sense of his body being beyond the control of, and even in conflict with, his mind. By the time remembered in Book VIII Augustine has already accepted intellectually the truth of the Christian faith, but his intellectual assent cannot drive the changes of physical lifestyle and continence which he believes are necessary for him to be a true Catholic.

“In my own case, as I deliberated about serving my Lord God which I had long been disposed to do, the self which willed to serve was identical with the self which was unwilling. It was I. I was neither wholly willing nor wholly unwilling. So I was in conflict with myself and was dissociated from myself” (Conf. VIII, x).

Augustine finally understands that the weakness he experiences is part of himself and not an alien force acting on him from outside (as believed by the Manichees). His interpretation in the *Confessions* of this state of being as he looks back is doctrinal. As Bishop of Hippo he develops his theology of original sin, mankind’s inborn state of sin inherited from Adam’s fall in the Garden of Eden. However, this is his later theory of understanding of the human condition overlaid on the original

experience. In the actual events of the story of the conversion, the famous account of his garden revelation (Conf. VIII, xii) – it is a moment of clarity of interpretation of St Paul's Epistle to the Romans (13:13-14). – an admonition to put aside all the desires of the flesh and put on the Lord Jesus Christ, that changes him. This particular point of understanding depends on another earlier interpretation of scripture (Romans 7:22-25) related in Book VIII where St Paul himself ponders the impossibility of controlling the body without the presence of the grace of God. In the conversion experience Augustine aligns his own autobiographical identity with that of St Paul. He understands himself and his own needs and weakness through this interpretation of scripture, and this gives him the strength and courage to finally commit himself to the authority of the Catholic church.

Augustine's story has remarkable similarities to Mark's story. Mark too tells a story of struggling to understand his divided self – on one side the cradle Catholic fearful of breaking the rules of the tradition and on the other, the rational intellectual seeking to live freely: on one side the addictive personality driving behaviour which Mark despises – on the other, the liberal counsellor accepting that human beings are not perfect. Mark, like Augustine, has worked hard at the reflexive project of his own self-identity. Through theological study he too has found a key, the spirituality of imperfection (a less judgemental twenty first century way perhaps of expressing the doctrine of the Fall), to interpret himself and unify his life narrative. The journey inwards to self-knowledge and self-acceptance has been an essential element of the process. Without that understanding of self there could be no alignment of the theological tradition and his own story, and canonical narrative theology insists that it is in the alignment of tradition and autobiography that secure Christian self-identity is constructed (Stroup, 1981, p.171).

In Book X of the *Confessions* Augustine ponders the problem of knowing oneself completely. Only God, he concedes, knows everything about a person.

“But you, Lord, know everything about the human person; for you made humanity” (Conf .X, v).

Augustine therefore seeks to confess to God both what he knows of himself and what he does not know. In a neo-platonic meditation he records himself ascending to God in a corresponding descent into himself - through his bodily senses, his mind and his memory. In struggling to understand himself he also struggles to define his relationship with God.

“So great is the power of memory, so great is the force of life in a human being whose life is mortal. What then ought I to do, my God? You are my true life. I will transcend even this my power which is called memory. I will rise beyond it to move towards you, sweet light [...] As I rise above memory, where am I to find you? [...] If I find you outside my memory, I am not mindful of you. And how shall I find you if I am not mindful of you? (Conf. X, xvii).

Augustine is convinced that the way inwards is the true way to knowing God and knowing himself, but he cannot find the exact place within himself where God dwells. This paradox in understanding brings the meditation on memory to a close. He concludes with a remarkably modern, constructivist piece of thinking – God dwells in his memory because God is made real there when Augustine remembers him.

“Why do I ask in which area of my memory you dwell, as if there really are places there? Surely my memory is where you dwell, because I remember you since first I learnt of you, and I find you there when I think about you” (Conf. X, xxv).

The presence of God is found within as Augustine remembers his past experience and identification with God through worship and scripture. Augustine accepts this mystery as the real presence of God within him – a God who speaks but is not always heard.

“Your best servant is the person who does not attend so much to hearing what he himself wants as to willing what he has heard from you” (Conf. X, xxvi).

The challenge then is not so much to know oneself and know God, but to actually do what God, and not the self, wills.

Anne's story about the inward turn of her faith also reflects a journey towards self-knowledge. It is as she comes to understand herself more clearly through her illness and her rejection of external forms of church, that she also has a real experience of God's presence within her. She interprets this not as knowing God through her memory, but knowing God as a source of strength, peace and unity at the centre of her being. God is a presence that can be sourced through reflection and meditation. As Augustine finds God within himself when he remembers and thinks about his experience of God, so Anne's experience of God's presence within herself flows from her own interpretation of the Christian tradition and her knowledge of Buddhist teaching. Her beliefs give her a secure framework on which to build her self-identity in her workplace. Not only that, the framework enables her to relate to others at work with a great deal of flexibility whilst still feeling secure in her core authentic self. Anne shows something perhaps of Niebuhr's answer to the human condition explored in the "Responsible Self" (1963). Niebuhr sees fragmentation of self-identity as inevitable because of our need to respond to the circumstances and people around us in many, different and divisive ways. He writes that belief in the Christian symbol of Jesus crucified and resurrected can lead to a different, positive way of living and being – an existence where self-identity grounded in the One God can reconcile our responses to those around us and make us whole. Jesus Christ is the prime example of this new, unified way of living.

"The responsible self we see in Christ and which we believe is being elicited in all our race is a universally and eternally responsive I, answering in universal society and in time without end, in all actions upon it, to the action of the One who heals our diseases, forgives our iniquities, saves our lives from destruction, and crowns us with everlasting mercy" (Niebuhr, 1963, p.145).

Niebuhr accepts that Christian believers will never in this life reach this point of total reconciliation –

"In our biographies as in our human history the process of reconciliation has begun; at no point is it complete. Its completion is our hope and in this way our telos and our eschaton" (Niebuhr, 1963, p. 144).

Anne has discovered some sense of reconciliation between herself, the world and God in her own interpretation of the Christian tradition. Turning inwards to find herself and adopting a “messy”, unstructured faith paradoxically gives her a more certain core of Christian self-identity.

All three of these research actors show that the journey inwards to self-knowledge and further, to self-acceptance, can be painful and challenging. Jane’s story particularly seems to reflect an internal division between her intellectual, academic understanding of the Christian faith and her inner, emotional response to faith experience. Her inability to find her own contemporary words to express her inner life is part of this divide. In her academic role she recognises expert knowledge and language and speaks it comfortably so that she is secure in her professional identity. In her faith life Jane also relies on the words of the experts – in scripture and liturgies - but she cannot always relate this language to her day to day experience. There is therefore a gap between her chosen faith language and her workplace discourse and identity. Comparing this experience with Augustine’s account of his faith identity development shows some similarities. It is notable that his account of his conversion experience in Book VIII relates, first and foremost, to a conversion to the Catholic Church and an acceptance of the Church’s authority. His belief in Christ has already taken hold before this moment but in the garden experience Augustine takes hold of the tradition and language of the Catholic community and allows that tradition and language to finally take hold of him. Up to the point of this conversion Augustine has been an expert in the narratives of philosophy, gnostic beliefs and neo-platonism. From the conversion onwards he has to become also an expert in the narrative and language of contemporary Catholicism. He becomes increasingly comfortable with his Catholic Christian self-identity as he becomes more familiar with the scriptures and liturgies. The academic approach which he has taken all his adult life in the search for truth and self-knowledge is extended into his theological study as he retreats with his mother and friends to read and reflect at Cassiciacum (Book IX). Augustine has to become an expert in his

theological understanding in order to express his new faith. His emotional response to the Christian faith has to be interpreted through an expert theological lens and language before he can trust himself to express it. It is interesting that at Cassiciacum he recalls particularly turning to the Psalms, perhaps the most emotive words in scripture, in order to find words to express his novel sense of worship. Ambrose suggests that he should read the Book of Isaiah but Augustine writes of reading the first passage and failing to understand it.

“So I put it on one side to be resumed when I had had more practice in the Lord’s style of writing” (Conf. IX, v).

Augustine, looking back at this period of his life, recognises that he had yet to develop his allegorical style of interpreting scripture. His story in the *Confessions* of his journey inwards to Christian belief is underpinned by a largely untold story of the eleven years of study and reflection since his conversion. It provides an interesting parallel to the story told by Jane whose identity is also primarily academic and scholarly.

The stories of Mark, Anne and Jane all speak of their tellers making a journey inwards towards greater self-knowledge resulting in varying expressions of Christian self-identity in their workplace setting. The story tellers seek above all to construct autobiographical narratives that show authenticity in their expression of their self-identity at work. They want to have a sense of real communication with workplace colleagues: communication that involves their deepest sense of self-identity. The research actors have all come from traditional Christian backgrounds and have, over the years, taken the narrative of that tradition and worked with it in order to develop their own narrative of Christian self-identity. For Mark the idea of a spirituality of imperfection has become a theological narrative around which he can unify and justify the differing needs and desires he recognises within himself. He is unable to resolve his inner tensions and therefore has found a satisfactory way to live with them and accept them. His theological narrative enables him to develop an authenticity of self-identity for himself and with colleagues. For Anne the journey inwards has been driven by questions raised through her

experience of the desperate needs of others. External forms of church have been unable to cope with these challenges. Most of all the challenge of her own illness has forced her to look within herself for strength and meaning. Her faith narrative depends on the idea of God within her and her Christian self-identity is constructed around this belief. Based on this intellectualised approach a unified self-identity is created which is flexible and resilient enough to survive in the workplace. Anne has developed a way of being in the workplace that gives her a sense of authentic Christian identity whilst enabling her to maintain open, accepting, ethical communication with colleagues. For Jane the journey inwards continues to raise uncertainties. There is a strongly intellectualised understanding of Christian ethics and behaviour closely tied to a deep commitment to professionalism and service. Authentic Christian identity is played out in this professionalism but the deep emotion of a faith at the core of her life remains internalised. The traditional words of liturgies help to support this identity in her workplace role but Jane's personal faith narrative seems divided between living out her ethics in daily life and her inner yearning for Christian perfection. This dissonance between external life and inner mystery is for her an ongoing source of pain and suffering.

All three of these research actors show distinctive spiritualities in their response to God in their workplace experience. Like Augustine they have all nurtured an inner, spiritual awareness in order to cope with the experiences of life. The narrative of their spirituality has played an important part in their constructions of self-identity.

Mark is embedded within a Catholic spirituality which continues to play a major role in his life. His interpretation of the sacramental quality of Catholic worship leads him to set a high value on the day to day experiences and relationships of workplace existence. Though he feels the judgement of Catholic moral teaching, he adopts belief in a spirituality of imperfection as a way through to acceptance of his broken self and imperfect working environment. Self-acceptance is a spiritual

imperative for Mark whose faith centres on belief in a God of forgiveness and love. Mark seeks above all an authentic spirituality which can sustain him in an holistic Christian self- identity across all his life roles.

Anne's spirituality, though based in an Anglican tradition, has been adapted under the influence of her experience. There are echoes of liberation theology in Anne's thinking as she tells of her concern for the excluded and the ignorant. Traditional Anglican spirituality has failed her in two ways – first, because of the exclusive nature of the established church, and secondly because of her own experience of a non-caring parish church. Anne has developed her inner spiritual strength in order to cope with these challenges. She has turned inwards and found God and personal liberation within herself in an adaptation of Christian and Buddhist spiritualities.

Jane has a deep awareness of the imperfect nature of the world and her workplace environment. She is seeking a spirituality of perfection in her Christian faith but this requires a separation between her spiritual life and her working life. Her yearning for perfection drives her ethical standards and expectations yet leaves her unable to pray in her own words. Her experience of God in scripture and liturgy makes her feel small and unworthy. Her spirituality therefore nurtures a hidden and emotional inner self-identity whilst standing in judgement on her workplace experience.

The quest for the happy (blessed) life: frameworks for living

“When I seek for you, my God, my quest is for the happy life” (Conf. X, xx)

*“I who
have been made free
by the tide’s pendulum truth
that the heart that is low now
will be at the full tomorrow.” (Thomas. 2004, p. 246)*

In three of the interviews Christian self-identity is shown particularly in the active pursuing of an ideal of a virtuous, balanced way of living. In the workplace this ideal is described here variously as seeking to be good, nice, professional, and a better employee. As well as sharing this quest for an ethical Christian self-identity, these three research actors also tell of the importance of belonging to particular church communities and of the influence of the Christian narrative of their communities on them.

Doreen’s story begins with an admission that she has not really thought about her role as a Christian in the workplace before.

“I think the religious side, my spiritual side of my life, and work – I’ve never really considered as being separate or together – it’s something I hadn’t thought about.”

However, moving on from this, Doreen adopts a global plan for her story to show how she is currently developing from a passive Christian faith to a much more active one as she and her family have left the Anglican tradition to join a Baptist church. This plan forms the basis of a justification for not having previously considered the link between faith and work very much.

“So I think that kind of church (*Baptist*) you tend to reflect much more on your own spirituality and how it applies in the outside

world, whereas before, it was just you went to church on a Sunday and it was very much separate from that.”

After this interview I noted that my question about her life as a Christian in the workplace had given Doreen a new concept to consider. The story is therefore a first attempt at understanding and interpreting this concept.

Doreen’s story tells of an upbringing in an Anglican village church, going to Sunday School, singing in the choir and ringing church bells. Her faith is based on a strong ethical foundation – at work she aims for -

“honesty and trustworthiness and a sense of thinking about what you’re doing and whether something is right or wrong.”

After leaving home for university Doreen had a period of non-church attendance but returned to the Anglican church after marriage when her own children were born. Feeling dissatisfied with the Anglican church community they had joined, Doreen and her husband recently moved to a local Baptist church after meeting the minister and his wife through their children’s school and liking them.

“We decided to give that church a try and then we really felt at home straight away. So we went into a much more evangelical type of church – very different, very happy clappy, and at first it was a very big culture shock – we weren’t sure- but there was something that kept us there.”

In her professional career Doreen has also had a major shift – she worked for several years as a primary school teacher before joining the university four years ago as a student support specialist.

There is a global theme in Doreen’s story of development, demonstrated in the change that is taking place in her faith as she gets to grips with the Baptist tradition. The more overt evangelism of her new community is a recurring anxiety in her story as she grapples with interpretation of this in her workplace life. She is concerned to appear as a “normal” person at work in order not to alienate colleagues and students.

“I feel quite strongly the workplace is not a place to bang on too much about church. I feel that if you are too much your typical Christian you come across often as being a bit odd.”

This global theme of oddness and normality is repeated throughout the interview. A later discussion about Hallowe'en reinforces the point.

"I remember somebody who objected very strongly to people in the bank who had these devil things on - and actually went up and said so. I'm not sure how much good that does. I can see why she did it - but confronting people about it would make her seem a bit eccentric and odd. Rather I prefer that I just don't do Hallowe'en."

Doreen adopts an open and tolerant stance towards non-Christians and her workplace colleagues.

"If you're too strict in what you do and what you won't do, it can give the impression that somehow to be a Christian you can't have fun, you can't have a normal life. So I've always worked on the idea - you have to sort of set morals and principles that you live with, but you will also go out and mix with people."

Doreen admits that she likes to feel liked by colleagues at work. She is line manager to about twenty part-time staff and occasionally has challenging staffing issues to deal with, which she finds difficult. Staff relationships are another global theme in the interview. Doreen is not sure whether her discomfort over handling difficult situations is a faith issue or a personality trait.

"I think some of it is a faith thing, because I don't like hurting people - but on the other side of it, it's a personal thing as well."

Doreen accepts the premise that personality is inborn rather than constructed through upbringing. She recognises however that Christian ethics are deeply embedded within her. The discussion goes on to current difficulties with funding in her department and the possibility of having to make some staff redundant. Doreen finds the situation very uncomfortable.

"If you have any kind of Christian background, then you tend to be more to the caring side of things- possibly more than ruthless, where you say this is what I have to do. Some people find that very easy - well, I imagine some people find it easier just to say - well, this is what's got to happen- this is what money dictates we have got to do."

Doreen's Christian self-identity at work seems to be equated with caring and kindness. Nevertheless, she also sees her role as a manager in another light, being accountable to her employer.

“There isn’t an endless bit of money [...] you have a certain responsibility, accountability to the people you’re employed by as well.”

She quotes Jesus in the parable of the talents – (Luke 19: 11-26) seeing that as an instruction to do one’s job properly. There is a tension between Christian kindness and Christian management of staff.

The story of Doreen’s change of profession from teaching to her work in the university gives an insight into her own view of work and its role in her life. Doreen’s sense of responsibility to employer and her need to do a good job is emphasised. She tells of deciding to give up teaching after seven years as a very successful primary teacher because she felt that her work was taking over her whole life. This was a major decision.

“I’d trained for it and I knew that I was doing a good job. I also felt a bit of a failure walking away from it, but basically I knew my personality and teaching didn’t go because however many hours I put in, it would never be enough.”

In order to achieve more time in her life for family and friends Doreen took the job at the university. Her mother’s unexpected early death also contributed to her feeling that life should be more than just work. Surprisingly though in a discussion about vocation Doreen does not see teaching as her prime vocation.

“I think with the teaching - that is God using my skills and my personality and character.”

Her real vocation she feels is to nursing –

“I’ve always wanted to nurse and was never able to do that and now I volunteer at the hospice. Even if you can’t put those Christian elements of your life into your actual paid work – there are so many other things that you can do.”

Doreen seems to be making a distinction between her Christian self-identity and her work day self-identity. Some of the elements of her Christian self-identity are separated off from her workplace identity. Her belief that Christian identity can only be connected with caring, goodness, compassion and love results in a situation where parts of her

workplace experience cannot be included within the Christian framework. There seems to be some division in her self-identity.

At the end of Doreen's story the global theme of personal faith development and change re-appears. She feels that the teaching in her church is leading her to a more holistic view of faith and work.

"I wouldn't have said that I had ever thought about that – work and church – but a lot of our teaching is that it isn't separated out. Once you have accepted that you have got to do it – it's how you actually do it – I'm working on that."

Doreen seems to be in the process of constructing a more resilient work/faith narrative of self-identity under the influence of her new church tradition.

Thematic coherence in Doreen's story is found in the underlying sense of development and change. There is a movement from the security of an Anglican Christian upbringing with its accepted norms of Christian behaviour, to a different Baptist tradition with its challenging expectations about witness and mission. Doreen needs to be liked and accepted by work colleagues. Her preferred Christian self-identity is to be seen as a nice, approachable, normal workplace person and responsible employee. However, her new tradition is raising questions about whether she should be more overt about her faith in the workplace. The story shows Doreen working through some of the tensions raised by these questions. She is re-assessing her Christian self-identity and its expression in the light of the new tradition.

Analysing Doreen's story within Clandinin and Connelly's three dimensional narrative space it is her experience of the contrast of different church traditions that provides the thread that holds the narrative together. She speaks of starting out in the Anglican tradition and absorbing a solid framework of Christian behaviour and ethics from her upbringing, so that her Christian self-identity becomes synonymous with her personality and personal preferences. High standards of care

and respect for others are the outworking of this identity in the workplace, as well as a heavy sense of responsibility towards the employer and high expectations of herself and her own work performance. The change in church tradition provides a challenge to this established way of being. The influence of an evangelistic church community which encourages a more active witness to faith is currently being assimilated into her own narrative of self-identity. Doreen's story shows that she is concerned about how far she wants to absorb this tradition, evidenced by her repeated emphasis on oddness and normality of Christians in the workplace. She is in the process of constructing a balanced faith narrative of her own which takes elements from both traditions, and she is aware of this ongoing development within herself and the questions it is raising.

"I sometimes feel that perhaps I should be doing more than I'm actually willing sort of at the moment to do – it's a kind of growth."

John's story also tells of a person who is seeking a balanced, ethical style of Christian living and working. Born into a staunch Anglican family, son of a clergyman, and educated in the independent school system, John is now nearing retirement after a long and successful career in the university as a lecturer and media specialist. Outside the workplace John is a devoted father to a large family and a committed, long-term member of his local Anglican parish church. The global plan of John's story is to show how through conscientious attention to family duty, determination to realise his own potential in his professional life, and keeping the faith of his upbringing, he has achieved a life/work/faith balance that enables him to experience a unified sense of self-identity. The story records the concurrent progress of these different themes throughout until the climax of the account is reached in the balance achieved. After this interview I noted that the story was told with a great deal of emotion.

John's career narrative takes him from teaching in a Grammar School, through making educational videos for schools, then working in the Education department of a local authority and finally to teaching in the

university. There is a global theme of ongoing tension in his story between seeking to realise his own potential in his professional life and doing the right thing for his growing family. Over the years he has experienced a sense of “being in the fast lane” because of the pressure of family life.

“My life has been in the fast lane, for me, in terms of my nature. I’ve been pushed along faster than I would have chosen to go. Life has seemingly come at me all the time.”

John believes that this pressure has prevented him from developing as rich a spiritual life as he might have done otherwise.

“There is no way I could fulfil my responsibilities and take weeks for thinking great thoughts – it’s not an option and I’m too tired once I’ve come home.”

He regrets that he has not reflected on his Christian experience as much as he could have done, and that therefore his narrative of Christian self-identity at work, in his own eyes, has not been fully developed.

Undercurrents of anger and frustration run through John’s faith/work story. First of all he tells of his gap year experience (between school and university) as a teacher in a Christian missionary school in Kenya. He remembers getting angry with the students on one occasion, then his decision to pray about his anger, and the ensuing change in his attitude to his young pupils.

“The Spirit led me to stand back and consider carefully, and I realised that if I was going to make any progress with them I needed to confess my anger, my lack of love for them as young people – and after I had knelt at my bed and done that, the situation changed, so that was quite a lovely experience early in my Christian life.”

During his student years John tells of suffering emotional upheaval and it was this Christian theme of needing to forgive those who wrong you that strengthened him – a theme he drew specifically from the writings of Paul Tournier, psychotherapist and theologian, at the time. John’s story paints a picture of a young man with an insecure self-identity struggling to make the faith of his upbringing real in his own experience. These episodes are linked later in his story to another more recent occasion in

the university when John felt angry with a re-organisation of responsibilities.

“For various reasons I was quite upset – so again – going back to the Kenyan experience, the Spirit convicted me, drove me to my knees and told me that I needed to forgive those who I felt were wronging me.”

All of these memories are accompanied by a strong sense of emotion. The doctrine of forgiveness is a global theme in John’s story - the same experience of anger and the need to forgive those who are wronging him, is repeated. John sees this as a development in his spiritual life not his professional life.

“It’s been part of my spiritual growth rather than my professional growth that experience.”

There is a separation in his mind between the two.

Alongside the story of John’s career and his family is a story about church belonging and attendance. Brought up in a strong Anglican background John places importance on church-going throughout his story. At one stage with several young children to care for, going to church becomes challenging. This is seen as a period without spiritual sustenance. John is critical too of the standard of worship in that church.

“The teaching wasn’t as sound or biblically focussed as one would hope – one wasn’t able to feed on that in the way that one hopes to as part of the whole experience of church.”

John discovers that for him the reading of scripture is central to his faith.

“I discovered as the months went on that the two lessons, the two Bible readings were for me the sort of spiritual heart of the service.”

The evangelical church tradition with its emphasis on the reading of scripture, within which John had been brought up, is re-asserted as scripture provides the anchor for Christian self-identity in a period of stress and difficulty. As the themes of John’s story reach their climax, it is finding a church community where the family feel at home that provides a base for John’s spiritual stability.

The global themes of family life, work life and church life reach a point of happy balance at the end of John's account. His fulfilling job in the university, a house near to work so that he can help care for his children properly, a church where the family feel comfortable - these are the elements which come together to create for him the happy, blessed life. His identities as professional man, family man and church man are brought together in a satisfying pattern.

“The great thing about coming and finally settling here was that we found a church and started to become involved in the life of a church and all of a sudden the work/life balance thing was back properly in balance - and so for twenty two years I had this great blessing of being able to hold everything together – my family, my work and my very slow spiritual development.”

The picture of the Christian man is complete but there is a separation between the elements that remains unbridged. The story of development ceases twenty two years ago, partly because story-telling time runs out, but also because there is a sense in which the past twenty two years represent in John's mind a complete picture of ethical Christian self-identity and the happy life.

Thematic coherence is found in John's story in the multiple strands. Firstly there is his identity as a family man – devoted to his family yet at times resentful of their demands so that there is an element of guilt as he pursues his professional fulfilment. Secondly there is the identity as the professional man searching for a job in which he feels he can reach his full potential and be appreciated. Thirdly, there is the Christian identity, tied closely to family life and to being a member of a church with a particular form of Anglican worship. There is deeper thematic linking too in the accounts of anger, repentance and forgiveness which give the interview its emotional tenor. Although a happy balanced picture of self-identity is painted at the end of the narrative, the process of telling the story and interpreting his experience from the perspective of being a Christian in the workplace seems unsettling and painful. John's story has a strong confessional feel.

Analysing this story within Clandinin and Connelly's three dimensional narrative space of time, place and experience shows a developing sense of self-identity to be the thread which holds John's narrative together. In his early life there is a strong, inherited sense of Christian self-identity which acts as both an anchor and a challenge to his behaviour. John's narrative tells the story of how he makes this inheritance his own and gives it meaning in his own life, sometimes through painful experiences. He takes the ethical and establishment framework of the faith of his upbringing and finds ways to adapt it to underpin the different elements of his life. Christian responsibility plays out in his dedication to and care of his family. Professionalism becomes the standard by which he measures his Christian life in the workplace. Membership of a satisfying church community becomes the way to a fulfilled spiritual life. The twenty two years of blessing with which the story reaches its climax represent a balanced combination of these three separate elements and for John, a holistic picture of a Christian self-identity. However, the telling of the story raises memories of difficulties along the way. As these memories are seen in the context of faith development, deep emotions are stirred.

Chris's story differs from all the other accounts in this research. Chris speaks of his experience pre and post conversion to the Christian faith. He is therefore the only one to have become a Christian during his working life at the university. The global plan of Chris's story is to show how his behaviour and attitudes at work have changed since his conversion in 1991.

"I look at things from a different angle now, in some ways one of challenging as well."

There is a global theme in Chris's story of his recurring efforts to align himself with New Testament ideals and in particular, interpretations of those ideals offered by his Baptist church leadership. His ethical stance, his responsibility in relationships, his attitude to his work, are all coloured by his question "What would Jesus do?" Chris works in a media support role in the university and is a long term member of university staff. After

this interview I noted that there was a strong sense of an ethical duty in Chris's story which had been reinforced at conversion.

Chris remembers his post-conversion enthusiasm and his concern to demonstrate to colleagues his changed identity. He recounts an incident which illustrates his new found courage and ethical stance. A lecturer asks him to copy a video tape –

“I said ‘If it’s not copyright’ – and she said ‘Well, we don’t worry about copyright do we’ and I said ‘Yes we do!’ She said ‘Who is going to know apart from you and me?’ My answer was ‘Well God will’ - She was testing me”.

For Chris radical Christian behaviour also meant righting past wrongs in his life. He recounts how he totalled up the amount that he owed the university in pens and paper that he had taken home with him in the past – and repaid it. Being a better, more honest employee is part of the Christian identity that he is adopting.

“I was asking myself the question – what would Jesus do? – which is quite a challenge.”

Chris hopes that his faith has made him a better person as well as a better employee. Working in a service department in the university he comes across some difficult customers. Remembering someone who was very difficult to get on with he recounts –

“So this person I’m thinking of – I really did try to alter my attitude to him but it took a great deal of effort.”

Chris adopts the abbreviation “EGR” or “Extra grace required” to sum up his changed attitude to difficult people. He describes a new generosity in his life.

“He’d ordered a book and he’d had a foul weekend – something to do with money- and he came storming in ‘Cancel the book!’ – he was really fuming. So I said to S once he’d gone – ‘Shall we buy it for him?’ – so we did.”

The colleague is unsurprisingly moved by this generosity and extremely grateful. Chris remembers –

“That was incredible and I don’t think I would have thought of it or done it in the past. It was because I had responded to the

teachings I'd been hearing. Other people it comes naturally but maybe I needed Jesus' teachings to do that kind of thing."

This is a global theme in Chris's story that the demands of his faith sometimes run counter to his natural inclinations and personality. He notes too that he now makes an effort to listen more to colleagues.

"I don't think it comes naturally to me although people do tell me that I'm a good listener."

As Chris's story progresses it seems that his enthusiastic, post-conversion Christian self-identity becomes less secure. He regrets not being eloquent about his faith, especially in an argument.

"I can't say I've done any evangelising- can't say in the last couple of years I have been in a good healthy discussion about it."

He finds it difficult to speak openly about his faith even with his close family.

"I do find it difficult to speak about Christianity – I suppose I'm no different from other people – I don't know."

Then in an oblique criticism perhaps of his own church's evangelistic style –

"I think some people can't stop – which may be good and may be bad, depending on who they are speaking to."

There is a sense in which Chris is measuring his own standard of witness and discipleship against the idealism and expectations of his church tradition. The joy of his initial conversion and change in lifestyle is now clouded by anxieties about his performance as a Christian. In part he blames his own personality and lack of ability for his sense of failure in progressing in the Christian life.

"I do believe I'm a slow thinking person and I can't take too much on board at once, and switch from one thing to another. I find it very difficult to do. I'm making excuses I know."

Whereas at first in his Christian life Chris felt that he was effectively aligning his self-identity with New Testament patterns, now he knows more about scripture and the faith, he feels that he may be failing.

Thematic coherence in this interview is seen in the narrative intention of showing a change from pre-conversion to post-conversion identity. Changes in behaviour are put down to the effect of Christian teaching. Christian self-identity however is far from secure. Church expectations seem to undermine Chris's confidence in his achievements. Chris feels deeply the "oughts" of Christian discipleship and is conscious of a sense of failure. The joy of conversion seems to have become lost in anxieties about his performance.

Analysing this story within Clandinin and Connelly's three dimensional narrative space of time, place and experience, it is the time element that dominates. Time is pre-1991 and post-1991 and in some sense the story has stuck in the immediate post-1991 frame. However Chris shows as his story progresses that he is aware that his Christian self-identity is developing from a simpler, post-conversion state to a more complex, questioning and perhaps more unsure ongoing state. In the workplace Chris currently adopts niceness and being a good employee as the standards for his faith identity but senses that he could discover more. There is a separation between his church identity and his workplace identity. When asked whether his church and work lives meet he replies:

"I can see them intertwining a lot. A lot of what I've learnt here I take to church – technical stuff. It's whether I can bring lessons from church back here – more difficult."

Chris recognises the challenge of developing his workplace narrative of Christian self-identity. It may depend on further developing his conversion faith into something deeper and more complex.

These three stories demonstrate three individuals seeking to create self-identities that match up to personally held ideals of Christian living. Each person has developed, or is developing, a personal narrative of a Christian good or happy life, deeply influenced by their own denominational church teachings and traditions. Each is attempting to live in this narrative, and through it create a sense of unity of self-identity across their various life settings. The quest for moral character is

important in these stories and it is sought and measured against the perceived standard set by the Christian teaching in the research actors' churches. In MacIntyre's discussion of virtues for our own time he explains his theory of the moral or good life, arguing that it is the very search for goodness, the quest itself that brings it about.

“ - the good life for man is the life spent seeking for the good life for man, and the virtues necessary for the seeking are those which will enable us to understand what more and what else the good life for man is” (MacIntyre, 1985, p. 219).

He goes on to argue that such virtues are closely tied to narrative traditions and that morality and goodness can only be defined in relation to the tradition in which they stand. Therefore a key virtue may be to have an adequate sense of the traditions to which one belongs. If one belongs to a living tradition then possibilities for the future will appear as well as preservation of the past.

“Living traditions , just because they continue a not-yet-completed narrative, confront a future whose determinate and determinable character, so far as it possesses any, derives from the past” (MacIntyre, 1985, p. 223).

Within a living and changing tradition an openness to the future, whilst not denying past strengths, may give possibilities for developing and growing personal narratives of Christian self-identity through interpretation of the tradition. However, a closed tradition may do the opposite and stunt the growth of self-identity.

Augustine's story in the *Confessions* seems a classic example of MacIntyre's narrative quest. From the beginning Augustine tells of his search for truth. Even as he remembers his unhappy schooldays he recounts that he -

“took delight in truth. I hated to be deceived, I developed a good memory, I acquired the armoury of being skilled with words, friendship softened me”

but he regrets that he sought good things in God's creatures rather than in God himself.

“My sin consisted in this, that I sought pleasure, sublimity, and truth not in God but in his creatures, in myself and other created beings” (Conf. I, xx).

The quest continues whilst Augustine is a student at Carthage. Here he discovers the work of Cicero, in particular a work (now lost), called *Hortensius*. This book kindles his love for wisdom –

“The book changed my feelings. [...] It gave me different values and priorities. Suddenly every vain hope became empty to me, and I longed for the immortality of wisdom with an incredible ardour in my heart” (Conf. III, iv).

The story of the *Confessions* shows Augustine’s self-identity being shaped by his immersion in the traditions of philosophy. However, his thirst for wisdom leads him into the hands of the gnostic Manichees with their distrust of the physical and their extreme dualism between good and evil. When Augustine eventually abandons this extreme creed he comes under the influence of a new philosophy, neo-platonism, with its understanding of the superiority of the things of the soul to the needs of the body. Finally, as his narrative quest reaches its climax, Augustine finds his long sought truth in the neo-platonic, Catholic Christian tradition. This for him becomes the key to the happy life, the blessed life, combining as it does elements of his past beliefs and answering his anxious questions about the nature of evil and his own weakness of will. In the *Confessions* Augustine finds some unity of self-identity in his narrative realisation of the happy life in spite of his ongoing sense of his sinfulness and failings. The ethical framework and traditions of the Catholic church of his day, together with his neo-platonic philosophical background, become for him thus a trusted structure of the virtues, within which right judgements can be made. The *Confessions* tell a story of a human being interacting with and experiencing a series of faith narratives. Augustine’s self-identity develops as his understanding and interpretation of these traditions develops. By the time he writes *City of God* his theological understanding has developed further as his experience of the reality of church community life deepens. His structure of the virtues holds but he becomes increasingly certain that good and evil must always be intermingled in this world. Only in the light of God’s

kingdom can true goodness be judged and known. Augustine is an example of a person working within living traditions which he feels that he can develop. In this process of theological development his own self-identity is also changed.

The narrative quests of my research actors are shaped in a similar way to Augustine's quest. Through experience, questioning and living within a variety of faith traditions, they too are shaping their personal histories and coming to an understanding of the happy life for themselves. From their Christian traditions they create meaningful, moral frameworks for their personal autobiographical narratives – trusted structures of Christian virtues. Acting within these frameworks they can experience a sense of unity of self-identity in the different spheres of action in their lives. Doreen's moral framework is firmly shaped by her upbringing in the Anglican church. The structure of this framework and its associated set of virtues is so deeply embedded in her that she cannot distinguish within herself between upbringing and personality – nurture or nature. However, her new Baptist church tradition is raising questions for her about elements of her current, deeply embedded narrative understanding. The more evangelical stance of her new community is challenging her innate sense of right and wrong ways of being. This is witnessed by her anxiety over "normal" and "odd" types of Christians. The tradition of more outspoken verbal witness to faith that Doreen is now encountering presents a challenge to her previously accepted narrative of Christian virtues. Should she assume an identity which aligns her with other colleagues in her workplace – or should she be seeking an identity which makes her different from others? Doreen is in the process of assimilating new dimensions of understanding into her personal quest for Christian virtues. Her narrative of the happy life is being questioned and may be to some extent reconstructed under the influence of the new tradition. The collision of church traditions may thus enable growth, development and changed self-identity.

John's moral narrative has sustained what he sees as twenty two years of happy, balanced Christian self-identity. His story shows how he has shaped the Anglican tradition in which he was brought up as he has progressed through his life experiences. Like Doreen the tradition is deeply embedded in him through his family and school life, and his story is an account of how he interprets this, sometimes through painful experiences, in order to make it his own. Professionalism, responsibility and dedicated church membership become the adopted virtues through which John expresses his Christian self-identity in the different elements of his life – work, family and faith. Unity of the happy life is achieved through his personal interpretation of his tradition and his adopted moral framework. There is a sense however that John's interpretation of the tradition has become fixed and to some extent closed over the twenty two years with which his story concludes. He regrets not having had the space and time to deepen his spiritual life through "thinking great thoughts", showing perhaps a desire to refresh his narrative quest.

Chris's moral framework was adopted on conversion to the Christian faith and has not changed much since then. His pre-conversion and his post-conversion self-identities are seen as distinctly different as he tells his story. His Christian state has been understood as fixed – based on New Testament ideals and virtues, but the impetus of the conversion experience has faded to leave an uncertainty and anxiety about his Christian performance. Chris has an idealistic picture of what the happy life is for him but seems unsure about realising it. He is unable currently to experience a unified identity between workplace and church using the moral narrative of his church tradition and Chris has not as yet found effective ways to interpret this tradition in order to achieve more unified identity. It may be that this represents an example of MacIntyre's argument about traditions becoming ineffectual when they are not adequately understood or when they are insufficiently challenged or developed (MacIntyre 1985, p. 223).

In the stories of these three research actors there is a strong sense of journeying towards a better Christian life and a deeper knowledge of self and God. Like Augustine in his story in *Confessions*, the story tellers are conscious of movement in their lives towards deeper understanding of God's will for them, stronger spirituality, and more distinctive Christian self-identity.

In Doreen's story the theme of change in her spirituality dominates. There is a sense that she has been wakened out of a comfortable, unthreatening Anglican spirituality into a more demanding, challenging Baptist tradition. The presence of God in her life has grown so that the demands of her faith are becoming more pressing. Whilst Doreen has a strong sense of progressing in her Christian pilgrimage she also has a sense of anxiety about letting go of the securities of the spirituality of her upbringing. In speaking of her mother's early death and her vocation to hospice nursing, Doreen shows a deep sense of the mystery of God's presence and action in her life. In exploring this vocation in her story she advances her understanding of her Christian self-identity.

John's spirituality is anchored in an evangelical Anglican tradition. Scripture is the foundation stone on which his Christian faith is built. John's story tends to separate his spiritual development from his professional development but there are moments throughout his account where he speaks of his faith in God's creative action in his life. There is simultaneous development in John's family and professional life as the story progresses but regret that spiritual development has been neglected because of lack of time. The story telling space however provides an opportunity for reflection and for appreciation of God's action in his life. As John links the moments of anger, repentance and forgiveness in his story he sees spiritual development and understands better his Christian self-identity.

Chris's story shows a spirituality based firmly in his Baptist tradition. It is a spirituality that seeks to express itself in Christian action in the

workplace setting. The example of Jesus in self-giving and service is central to Chris's Christian understanding of himself. However, the story shows an awareness of falling short of the expectations of the church's tradition. Chris speaks of a desire to deepen his spiritual life – to live the Christian life more fully and be changed further through Christ. The joy of opening his life to God in his conversion in 1991 has faded and Chris's story shows his need to renew his spiritual engagement.

Encounter, call and gifting : the self in relationship

“You called and cried out loud and shattered my deafness. You were radiant and resplendent, you put to flight my blindness.” (Conf. X,xxvii)

“I thank you for your gifts. Keep them for me, for in this way you will keep me. The talents you have given will increase and be perfected, and I will be with you since it was your gift to me that I exist.” (Conf. 1,xx)

*“You have no words yet vibrate
in me with the resonance of an Amen.” (Thomas, 2004, p.250)*

Kay’s story stands out from the others with its strong themes of encounter, call and gifting. The sense of a call from God or a vocation is present in some of the other stories but none show the same degree of depth in this area as Kay’s narrative. Encounter, vocation and gifting are the threads which bind Kay’s story together. Knowing God, knowing vocation and knowing self are the three themes that weave throughout the account. Kay believes in her own worth and value, based on her sense of God’s presence in her life. Quoting the parable of the pearl of great price (Matt.13:45-46) she says -

“God had showed me that I was the pearl – part of the treasure.”

Using Agar and Hobbs’ coherence theory the global plan of Kay’s story is identified as a desire to show how a childhood decision and promise is worked out and fulfilled in a forty year career in nursing and teaching which, at the time of the interview, is just coming to a close in retirement. The early part of the account tells how Kay experiences a call to nursing at eight years old and a call to teaching at fourteen years old. The death of her father and a powerful experience of God’s presence reinforce this sense of calling as well as her determination to achieve and fulfil her own potential.

“I knew as an eight year old that I was going to be a nurse. I knew I had to get the very best O Levels I could, I had to do my best so that I was well equipped to be a nurse.”

There is an understanding throughout the story that she has gifts in science and in caring for, teaching and encouraging others – and that these gifts have to be worked at in order to make the most of them. Kay’s Christian self-identity in the workplace is shaped by her sense of vocation and purpose.

The global theme of encounter with God begins with an experience of God’s presence when Kay is eight years old. Brought up in an Anglican church family and taken to Sunday School by her father, Kay remembers a moment of spiritual certainty and reassurance after her father’s early death.

“I suddenly had this picture of this place with green rolling hills, and I knew my Daddy was there - he was there with God and he was alright – but we were alright because God was with us. So that was a real encounter with God - that encounter with God was my first – God was a very real presence to me from then on. God became a person.”

This childhood experience is followed for Kay with a second spiritual encounter when she is twenty years old and in the third year of her nursing training.

“As a result of an evangelistic mission I discovered that although God was Almighty God, Jesus wanted to be my Saviour in a much more personal way – so that was a big move forward - and so everything after that that I did was prayed about and was following where God was taking me.”

This grounding of certainty in God’s presence with her provides the rationale for her ensuing career. Firstly a successful nursing career and then a move to nurse teaching in her forties, thus fulfilling a dual vocation to nursing and teaching.

There is however in Kay’s story another darker thread within the theme of encounter with God. From her early twenties onwards Kay suffers

from recurring periods of debilitating depressive illness. Looking back on her working life she reflects –

“I’ve prayed all the way through, and I had a sense of God with me all the way through and of needing to do the very best with all that God has given me. I would say that throughout those 40 years I have been conscious of God’s faithfulness and enabling me to get on and be what I do. I’ve learned a lot sort of sitting in the blackness with God and understanding. I will read my Bible every day – that’s sacrosanct.”

Prayer and scripture play a central role in Kay’s story as does her membership throughout of church communities and Christian fellowships in her workplaces. When questioned about whether she feels she belongs more to her current church community or to her workplace community she replies –

“In some ways I belong more to the work one than the church because I do more real things with them. There is a tension between the two – now to be part of the church and yet coming and serving.”

The global theme in this story of vocation and call is thus deeply entwined with Kay’s experience of God’s presence with her. After her nursing training she considers working as a missionary and goes on to do midwifery training which she finds challenging.

“I remember in my bedroom - there was a passage from Joshua – ‘Be strong for I the Lord your God am with you’ – so that kept me going.”

However, a first bout of her recurring depression leads to a change of direction and a new job where Kay’s academic skills are recognised. A Diploma in Nursing follows and a job as a Ward Sister in a large London hospital – but the missionary zeal remains and Kay decides that she should go to Bible college.

“I could only afford a term at Capernwray so I went, and I’d been accepted for staff of the Nurses Christian Fellowship but I needed to be able to drive. Well, I’d got the Capernwray bit but I couldn’t pass my driving test, so that door quietly blocked because by the time I had, they hadn’t got the funds to pay me – so that was that.”

There is a global theme within Kay's story of doors opening or closing as she pursues her career. As she recounts her story this is seen as God working in her life and using her talents.

"It's me as a Christian just living – walking through the doors that are ajar."

Missionary failure leads to a new job in a teaching hospital and then on to training to be a Sister Tutor, and eventually, aged forty nine, to taking a BSc in Nursing and becoming a university lecturer in physiology.

"So the door opened for me to move into teaching physiology and I loved it because to me within the physiology I saw the wonder of God, you know you would see a cell and the beauty of it at the different stages of division and you could see the beauty of what God had created .I was for ever to be heard in the lab –'isn't this beautiful - how marvellous!'. "

Kay's story has a strong global theme of using the gifts, talents and strengths she has both to serve God and to fulfil her own potential. The two aspects of gifting are closely bound together in her account right from her initial sense of call from God at the age of eight. Her experience of encounter and relationship with God gives Kay self-knowledge and a sense of her own value and ability. As she tells her story she is very aware of her contribution as a Nursing Sister to the life of the hospital in London during her time there.

"I did have an influence on people and the other interesting thing was – somehow my staff nurses always got a vision. My staff nurses weren't necessarily the most able ones when they came on the ward but they all went on to do more training and went further in their careers than their peers and certainly for one or two of them it was that I actually had faith in them and I saw their potential so I encouraged them."

This theme of encouraging others to fulfil their potential is another thread that runs through the story, together with a thread which reflects Kay's high standards of professionalism and expectations of her staff.

"Nursing is serving and I'm about serving other people and woe betide you as a nurse if you don't. I was a very old-fashioned Sister. As far as I was concerned I didn't care tuppence whether I was popular- that was not important- what was important was that we did the right thing by each patient all the time and that we took responsibility when we got it wrong."

However, Kay's story shows yet another thread running alongside this professionalism – a recurrent mention of experiencing bullying in the workplace. Three times during her account she tells of being bullied in the workplace – a sense of being unappreciated, unsupported or misunderstood by line managers. Kay demonstrates a heightened awareness of being undervalued by managers.

In her later career Kay is again fully aware of her strengths, abilities and responsibilities as a teacher in the university. Encouraging students and staff colleagues continues to play an important part in her workplace role.

“There were lots of students who were convinced that they couldn't do it and they could and there were a lot of dyslexics and they needed a huge amount of help to get there and they got there.”

On the other hand Kay could be a disciplinarian.

“If students really are failing it's not in their interest to pursue it. I could be strict but there were times when I would take a student aside and say- 'Look, I'm sorry, that's not acceptable behaviour, we can't have people treated like that' – and the minute they said sorry , I was soft as butter, but if they were trying to justify themselves then I really could be tough.”

Looking back at her relationship with staff colleagues Kay sees herself as an encourager and a listener. She tells of praying for colleagues regularly.

“I've been able to be alongside people in what I think is a pastoral Christian sense, helping Christians to grow, helping other folks to come back and find their faith.”

Starting a PhD in her mid fifties Kay's current contribution to the life of the university centres round supporting other research students. She is particularly involved in sustaining a research students' support group.

“To me it's a pastoral group – I think it comes out of being a Christian in the workplace ...it's not overtly (*about faith*) and a lot of what I do is not overt – it's about caring for people.”

Thematic coherence in Kay's story is found in the underlying thread of relationship with God leading to vocational purpose and fulfilment of personal potential. The Christian self-identity is one of faithful

determination and readiness to try new experiences, to walk through doors of opportunity that open and accept those that remain closed. Her story is marked by a concern for growth and development – both of herself and the people with whom she has worked. This reflects her personal Christian theology –

“God is leading us towards heaven and part of my theology is that our experiences on earth are preparing us to live in heaven so that everything we meet is intended that we should grow from.”

Kay’s self-identity appears much more unified between workplace and faith life than any of the other research actors. This may be because Kay’s personal theology of growth provides a strong rationale for the inclusion of all experience within her faith understanding. Even the darkness of personal loss, bullying and depressive illness are seen with hindsight as opportunities for encountering God.

“There have been lots of hard bits but on the whole in the hard bits I’ve been very conscious that God is there with me – I’ve not been required to walk them alone.”

Kay knows herself, her own gifts and her own value, and that knowledge is based on her belief in God’s belief in her.

Analysing Kay’s story within the Clandinin and Connelly three dimensional narrative space, it is the consistency of the sense of response to call through all the times, places and experiences that holds the narrative together. The sense of purpose and vocation, starting from an eight year old’s experience of bereavement and God’s presence, and sustained through a forty year career in nursing and teaching, is a constant thread throughout the account. The places of the story change as doors of opportunity close or open allowing Kay to live her life in many different settings but she views her experiences, good and bad, as reinforcing her settled Christian perspective. There is development of her faith self-identity but it also seems that there is an unchanging core in her self-identity. For Kay her faith is the anchor that gives her freedom to change the settings of her life whilst retaining an unchanging perspective.

“You can think new and different more easily from the security of being a Christian. God is there for you. To me there is not anything that is non-redeemable but you have to take responsibility.”

It is also worth noting that Kay has a clearly worked out work/faith narrative which she has constructed over the years. She is too a consummate story-teller and her confident presentation adds to the sense of a unified self-identity in her story.

“All real living is meeting” (Buber, 1923, p.17). Martin Buber’s words seem to relate closely to Kay’s narrative with its sense of encounter with God and its ensuing self-certainty and engagement with the world. In “I and Thou” Buber argues that true human identity (“I”) is only formed when human beings recognise and speak “Thou” in response to God’s call to them. When human beings speak of God rather than to God, then God can become a thing – an “It”. Only when relationship is made can real life be experienced.

“Objective speech snatches only at a fringe of real life. The *It* is the eternal chrysalis, the *Thou* the eternal butterfly – except that situations do not always follow one another in clear succession, but often there is a happening profoundly twofold, confusedly entangled” (Buber, 1923, p. 21).

Buber suggests that perfection of relationship with God remains unattainable and thus human identity always remains incomplete.

In some ways Augustine’s *Confessions*, though addressed to God, are designed to show evidence of a lack of relationship with God over many years which results in a confused sense of vocation and a restless self-identity. The Augustine depicted in the early chapters of the narrative as philosopher and searcher after truth, is someone who thinks of God as Buber’s “It”- a topic for exploration and discussion, rather than a being with whom one can form relationship. Indeed the most important part of Augustine’s conversion involves his acceptance of the incarnation, the possibility of the perfect neo-platonic One appearing as an ordinary human being. In contrast to Kay’s story, Augustine’s account tells the

story of someone deliberately refusing to hear God's call and turning away from his mother's Christian influence. His classical, pagan education and his years as a teacher of rhetoric and literature act to draw him even further away from the faith of his upbringing. However, writing the *Confessions* in around 397AD, Augustine is looking back to the time of his conversion eleven years before and seeing his whole career through the lens of his now understood vocation as Christian leader. The thread that holds the story together is the image of God calling him and filling him with guilt and restlessness of soul through the years of his adolescence and youth – until finally the barriers of pride and intemperance are broken down and the Christian faith is accepted. Augustine knows that it is possible to know about God without knowing God. In Book VII where he discusses the effect the Platonist books had on him he notes –

“I would learn to discern and distinguish the difference between presumption and confession, between those who see what the goal is but not how to get there and those who see the way which leads to the home of bliss, not merely as an end to be perceived but as a realm to live in” (Conf. VII, xx).

Even in Book VIII where Augustine records his conversion experience in the garden his relationship to God remains mostly cerebral rather than heartfelt. There is a decision to join the Catholic church and seek baptism but a complete response to God's call is still to come. Whilst at Cassiciacum a process of being broken down and learning to listen to God begins with emotional reading of the Psalms.

“My God, how I cried to you when I read the Psalms of David, songs of faith, utterances of devotion which allow no pride of spirit to enter in! I was but a beginner in authentic love of you” (Conf. IX, iv).

Augustine's baptism too is recorded as an experience which opens his heart –

“How I wept during your hymns and songs! I was deeply moved by the music of the sweet chants of your Church. The sounds flowed into my ears and the truth was distilled into my heart. This caused the feelings of devotion to overflow. Tears ran, and it was good for me to have that experience” (Conf. IX, vi).

It is not until Book X, writing about his current experience, that Augustine can fully interpret the experience of coming to have a personal encounter with God. Now he appreciates the power of incarnational faith and he recognises that God can only be known through the heart and in love. Augustine resorts to emotion and poetry to record his sense of relationship with God.

“Late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you. And see, you were within and I was in the external world and sought you there [...] You were with me, and I was not with you. [...] You called and cried out loud and shattered my deafness. You were radiant and resplendent, you put to flight my blindness. You were fragrant, and I drew in my breath and now pant after you. I tasted you, and I feel but hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I am set on fire to attain the peace which is yours” (Conf. X, xxvii).

Augustine’s developing theology of the “two loves” (*City of God XIV*) is thus driven by his own experience of God’s presence in his life. His vocation as Christian leader and teacher is discovered as he develops a sense of relationship with God. Within the safety of this relationship Augustine finally learns to accept his own weaknesses and his own humanity, and this is reflected in his writing and his theology. He recognises that God alone can give him the grace and strength to maintain his faith and his Christian identity.

Augustine’s story has been seen in the Church throughout the centuries as a classic account of Christian redemption and liberation through response to God’s call. His story of his past life and development is given a new framework of meaning as it is placed within the Christian narrative tradition and understood as a process of coming into relationship with the Christian God. McFadyen argues that this process transforms personal identity whilst leaving a person in their existing setting.

“Redemption is a recontextualisation which brings a person into a new community with a redeemed pattern of intersubjectivity. Simultaneously, however, he or she is ‘returned’ to the old community in a new way, as a transformed subject of communication with a new orientation who intends self and others in a new way. In other words, redemption is a transformed way of being in the world with others” (McFadyen, 1990, p.115).

Such a process of transformation rings true in the story of Kay and in other of the research actors' stories. The distinctiveness of Christian identity is found in the inner quality of relationships with others which somehow reflects the primary relationship with Christ. The new framework of meaning for the redeemed person can also give a sense of new freedom. For Augustine this takes the form of liberation from sexual guilt and restlessness of spirit. In Kay's account this freedom is expressed as a core of security in her life which enables her to be ever open to new experiences and ideas. There is too an openness to relationship with those around her and an ability to be alongside others as a companion and listener.

In the *Confessions* it is clear that Augustine's baptism and membership of the church also brings about a new relationship with the world and the people around him. His career as presbyter and then as Bishop of Hippo draws him, at first rather unwillingly, into a life of service and teaching. The *Confessions* show him struggling to find a new humility towards others, particularly in Book X where he subjects his behaviour to an intense self-examination. For such a gifted man, enjoyment of the praise of others is a challenging temptation –

“But the word proceeding out of the mouth and the actions which become known to people contain a most hazardous temptation in the love of praise. This likes to gather and beg for support to bolster a kind of private superiority. This is a temptation to me even when I reject it, because of the very fact that I am rejecting it. Often the contempt of vainglory becomes a source of even more vainglory. For it is not being scorned when the contempt is something one is proud of” (Conf. X, xxxviii).

Augustine's talents and abilities are for him both a treasure and a liability. Like Kay, Augustine's encounter with God finally brings a clear sense of vocation and purpose, a growing knowledge and understanding of himself, and an appreciation of the gifts he has been given in order to serve God and reach his own full potential. Like Kay, he knows and values his strengths and abilities as teacher, writer and thinker. At the

end of Book I as he reflects on his childhood he is clear that his learning and skill with words are his qualities but also gifts from God.

“An inward instinct told me to take care of the integrity of my senses, and even in my little thoughts about little matters I took delight in the truth. I hated to be deceived, I developed a good memory, I acquired the armoury of being skilled with words, friendship softened me, I avoided pain, despondency, ignorance. In such a person what was not worthy of admiration and praise? But every one of these qualities are gifts of my God: I did not give them to myself. They are good qualities, and their totality is my self” (Conf. I, xx).

Both Augustine and Kay show in their narratives that there is a fine balance to be drawn between valuing oneself and one’s gifts rightly whilst remaining humbly aware that these gifts come from God. For both of them it is in ongoing encounter with God and response to God’s call that this balance is found and held.

Kay and Augustine’s Christian self-identity is constructed in personal narratives of encounter, call and response to God. Their narratives allow a unity of self-identity across all the areas of their lives as all circumstances and relationships become places where God may be encountered, heard and answered. The narrative of vocation – at the heart of scripture and Christian theology provides a strong tradition to which personal narratives can be aligned, and within which personal meaning, purpose and identity may be found.

Kay’s spirituality is based on her certainty of personal relationship with God and her strong sense of purpose in life in her vocation. She has a disciplined approach to prayer, Bible study and church membership which underpins her whole Christian life. Kay’s self-identity is defined by her spirituality as she sees herself as a loved and valued child of God. From this position of personal security Kay is able to cope with her own bouts of depressive illness and also extend hospitality and understanding to the people around her. Her spirituality unifies her self-identity giving meaning and purpose to all aspects of life. Every experience is seen as

an opportunity for meeting God and this gives her a rationale for engagement with and commitment to workplace events and colleagues. Kay's ethical stance of Christian service is informed by a spirituality that affirms the absolute value of every human being.

Chapter 5 Discussion of Findings

When I began this doctoral study I wanted to explore how a sample of contemporary lay Christians express and sustain a cohesive work/faith self-identity in their workplace environment. In order to root my thinking in classical Christian autobiographical narrative, I adopted a suggestion to use the *Confessions* of St. Augustine of Hippo as a benchmark and template in my explorations. Augustine has proved a fruitful source of inspiration and structure in my work even though he is writing in a very different culture and setting to our own. It has been a surprise to find such a sense of continuity between the Bishop of Hippo's story (cAD400) and my research actors' stories (cAD2010). One aspect of Augustine's story which seems particularly relevant is his account of his sense of self-division and brokenness, stemming partly from his neo-platonic assumptions about the differing potentials of body and soul but also arising from his concerns with the human will and human desire, and the role of God's grace in the Christian life. My central research questions ask firstly whether a similar sense of division and fragmentation of self-identity is experienced by my research actors as Christians in their workplace environment. Secondly, if they do experience such fragmentation, how it is expressed in their work/faith self-identity; and thirdly, whether the experience of fragmentation prevents the development of any sense of deep, unified self-identity in their workplace experience. I explore these questions through an autobiographical narrative methodology.

Donald Polkinghorne writes that –

“we achieve our personal identities and self concept through the use of the narrative configuration, and make our existence into a whole by understanding it as an expression of a single unfolding and developing story. We are in the middle of our stories and cannot be sure how they will end; we are constantly having to revise the plot as new events are added to our lives. Self, then, is not a static thing nor a substance, but a configuring of personal events into a historical unity which includes not only what one has been but also anticipations of what one will be” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 150).

Polkinghorne sums up the constructivist approach to self-identity and autobiographical narrative that has been taken in this research both in the process of the ten interviews and in the analysis of the interview material. I am very aware too that the results of this project portray one moment in time and space for my research actors. Though I have used Augustine as a kind of benchmark and tried to be honest and consistent in my analysis methods, I know that the validity of my findings is limited and specific. As I say in my methodology chapter, quoting Clandinin and Connelly –

“in narrative inquiry, people are looked at as embodiments of lived stories” (2000, p.43).

I cannot claim that my actors are representatives of a theory or a category – all I can say is that they express their Christian self-identity in their workplace on this occasion using these narrative constructions. I can argue however (following Knight, 2002, p.125) that it is likely, because “human life has marked regularities”, that these research actors are “in some ways representative” of other Christians in the workplace, and that my findings “cohere with others”, as illustrated in my theoretical perspectives and review of the relevant literature.

St. Augustine, though based in a very different setting and time, expressed his own self-identity in a narrative form when he authored his *Confessions* and between his written story and these oral stories, between his interpretations of his experience and these interpretations - I have found echoes and reflections. In my Analysis chapter I have used my conceptual framework, drawn from a synergy between my reading of Augustine and my reading on the theory of self-identity, to group my research actors' stories together under four strands of understanding. These themes help to draw the stories together, answer my research questions and enable relationship between the stories. R S Thomas's contemporary reflective poetry also helps to focus the themes. Faith identity and self-awareness are slippery concepts and it is tempting to generalise in order to make sense of material. Thomas's verse reminds us that defining meaning in these areas remains a challenge.

In this Findings chapter I suggest that the evidence from Augustine's *Confessions* and his related theology, and the evidence from the research stories, point to a process of growing self-awareness and awareness of faith-identity in the story-tellers. I argue that the stages of this process provide the answers to my research questions. Firstly, it seems that articulating their world/faith or work/faith story highlights the points of fracture or dissonance within the teller's self-identity at different moments in their experience. Secondly, the story-tellers have to find words to interpret their experience of fragmentation and make sense of it within their faith, cultural and workplace settings. Frameworks of understanding are then established within which the research actors can hold world and faith together, and these frameworks may enable a sense of deep self-identity to be experienced within their fragmentation. I am not suggesting that this is a standard process through which all believers pass, but rather one way of understanding how Christian self-identity in the workplace may be expressed and sustained. My research actors show, in differing degrees, evidence of passing through this process.

Who am I ?

I suggest that the process begins with the question “Who am I?” For Augustine the need to answer this question stemmed from the need to answer critics in the North African church of his day about the validity of his ministry as Bishop of Hippo, and to provide an autobiography of his conversion and baptism for other educated men who might consider supporting the church. Peter Brown notes that Augustine sees all his past life as preparation by God for his present career as Bishop, and that all his experience is now interpreted through the lens of the scriptures.

“The *Confessions* is very much the book of a man who had come to regard his past as a training for his present career. Thus, Augustine will select as important, incidents and problems that immediately betray the new Bishop of Hippo. He had come to believe that the understanding and exposition of the Scriptures was the heart of a Bishop’s life. His relations with the Scriptures, therefore, come to form a constant theme throughout the *Confessions*” (Brown, 1967, p. 162).

So, when Augustine asks himself the question – ‘Who am I?’ – he sets out to discover, before God and his readers, and in the context of the scriptures, who the Bishop of Hippo is and what it is that makes him that person. The answer is partly a narrative of a life, but more importantly, it is the story of the journey of a heart towards self-understanding and self-acceptance in the light of Christian faith – a journey towards unified self-identity and inner peace. The *Confessions* takes the form of a prayer and as such it is addressed primarily to God.

In my contemporary research setting the question - ‘Who am I?’ - is presented to the research actors as I ask them to tell me the story of their life in the workplace as Christian believers. That of course is a very different question in some ways to the question Augustine was answering. Augustine was a Bishop and his ‘workplace’, the 4th century Catholic church, was his ministry. My research actors are lay Christians at work in a secular environment in the 21st century. Augustine was exploring his conversion in his story – my actors are exploring the relationship between their faith and their work. Nevertheless, in spite of these differences, there is something universal and timeless in the act of

storytelling in response to the question about who we are. In this research I concentrate particularly on the way such personal stories show construction and expression of self-identity, and in this aspect I have found connections between Augustine's story and my research actors' stories. For some of the actors this is the first time they have consciously considered their working life and their faith as part of the same story. The question gives them a different perspective from which to view their faith and work experience. The work/faith self-identity is thus constructed in the story-telling from this fresh perspective. As researcher I am in the position of both listener and "other" before whom the story is constructed.

Awareness of inner division

The question of who we are focuses our attention on the different roles we assume in our daily lives. My research actors become aware of dualistic assumptions and fragmentation of self-identity as they speak of themselves and their faith in the workplace setting. The context within which they are working is secular and pluralistic. The university, although tolerant to those of all faiths and none, places no particular value on religious belief. Faith at work is sidelined although the traditional values of the Christian meta-narrative, deeply embedded historically within the UK education system – such as honesty and respect for others – are encouraged. My research actors therefore are in a situation where professional workplace identity takes precedence over faith identity. The process of articulating their story illuminates the points of dissonance and similarity between their work and faith identities. As the workplace life and the life of faith are brought together, differences become clearer. Thus the evidence of the research actors' stories answers my first research question - they do experience a sense of division and fragmentation between their workplace and faith self-identities.

Augustine too reflects through the writing of his *Confessions* on the question of self-identity. Fascinated by the mystery of his inner life, he first defines his sense of self-identity as a dualism.

“Then I turned towards myself, and said to myself : ‘Who are you?’
I replied : ‘A man.’ I see in myself a body and a soul, one external,
the other internal” (Conf. X, vi).

As has been discussed previously, this body/soul dualism is seen as evidenced chiefly in a battle between two wills. Augustine depicts himself in Book VIII (v) of the *Confessions* as torn between a yearning for the eternal and a fear of letting go of the temporal. In his narrative he interprets this division in himself theologically as evidence of human beings' sinful nature inherited from Adam at the Fall (Genesis 3). Human beings long to be with God but their inherited sin bars them from true communion. The will to serve God is in a life-long struggle with self-will. However, as Augustine continues to record his journey inwards to

himself and metaphorically upwards to God he meditates further on the mystery of his inner life concluding that whilst God is not the power of mind nor resident in his memory, nevertheless God is the light that enables him to think and remember. His meditation is thus addressed directly to God.

“The ego, that is the power by which I was doing it, was not you. For you are the abiding light by which I investigated all these matters to discover whether they existed, what they were, and what value should be attached to them” (Conf. X, xi).

Augustine’s exploration in words in the telling of his story enables him to begin to make sense of his overwhelming experience of God’s action in his life. I have argued in this research that he develops a framework for understanding his self-identity, based on his own interpretative mixture of neo-platonic and Christian thinking, within which the relationship of body, mind, and soul can be held together. As the *Confessions* progresses however his framework becomes more complex as he explores different ideas. For example, in Book XIII Augustine suggests that there may be three aspects to the self (reflecting the three aspects of the Trinity and foreshadowing his later great work *De Trinitate*).

“The three aspects I mean are being, knowing, willing. For I am and I know and I will. Knowing and willing I am. I know that I am and I will. I will to be and to know. In these three, therefore, let him who is capable of so doing contemplate how inseparable in life they are : one life, one mind, and one essence, yet ultimately there is distinction, for they are inseparable, yet distinct” (Conf. XIII, xi).

The *Confessions* shows Augustine interpreting his own story and experience, and developing and changing his understanding of his own inner sense of fragmentation in an ongoing process. I suggest that the stories of my research actors also demonstrate one moment of interpretation of their own inner fragmentation in this ongoing process of self-understanding.

Dualism to fragmentation?

The evidence in this research indicates that my research actors reflect an inherited acceptance of the dualistic split between outer, physical life and inner mental or spiritual life that the Christian meta-narrative in the West has perpetuated. The inner life or life of the spirit (or Spirit) testified to by St Paul in his Epistles (eg. Eph 4:22-24), given neo-platonic undertones by Augustine and others in the early church, and seen as the power of rational thought by Descartes (*cogito ergo sum*, 1641) - appears in their stories in different ways and to varying degrees. Some sort of dualism in self-identity - spirit and flesh, soul and body, mind and body - becomes, it seems, inescapable when people begin to tell the stories of their work/faith life. The stories of Linda, Bill and Stan with their deliberate compartmentalisation of life into church and work modes particularly illustrate this phenomenon. The dualism is expressed not so much in a sense of being body and soul, but in a sense of having an inner and outer life running along parallel lines but seldom meeting in the workplace environment. This dualism is accepted as normal and workable, even though it may contribute to deep unease (as in Bill's and Stan's cases) and require the performance of two very different modes of being in the different worlds. In these examples the research actors' church membership seems to almost demand dualistic thinking.

The evidence in the research stories shows too the deeper sense of fragmentation of self-identity experienced by the research actors. In varying degrees they all exhibit fragmentation beyond dualism in their workplace and faith identities. Whether this fragmentation develops from their dualistic assumptions, or is caused by living in the pluralism and chaos of postmodernity (as endorsed by Bauman, 2002, p.1-2), or is due to the particular challenges of holding Christian faith in our own time, is less clear. Linda Woodhead argues that theologians need to take the postmodern fragmentation theory seriously but should be sceptical of a one-sided view. She writes that –

“fragmentation may be viewed not so much as the result of certain universal and unilinear modern processes, but as born from the

confusion generated by the plural modes of selfhood available to modern men and women”(Woodhead, 1999, p.58).

Woodhead thus insists that theology should analyse fragmentation of self-identity on a deeper level. She is not the first to emphasise the “plural modes of selfhood” available in contemporary Western society. Goffman’s earlier theory in “The presentation of the self in everyday life” (1959) of the performing self, acting appropriately within the different arenas of life, also points to the possibility of conscious or unconscious adoption of differing identities to meet life’s varying needs. As evidenced in the Analysis chapter, the research stories show cultural and workplace pressures, as well as faith and church issues, forcing the research actors to adopt different identities in the different arenas of their lives, and contributing to the experience of self-identity fragmentation. Mark, Anne and Jane’s stories demonstrate particularly the cultural gap between the language of faith and the workplace discourse. Understanding and living in this gap, causes deep tensions in self-identity. Whilst Mark, Anne and Jane all show a desire to present and live an holistic self-identity in the workplace, and are aware of the possibilities and pitfalls of dualistic thinking in the life of faith, they nevertheless experience the need to have different identities at work and they suffer fragmentation of self-identity because of cultural pressures.

This sense of living in two worlds provides another echo of the experience of Augustine. I have shown in my theoretical material how the Bishop of Hippo was a product of the two opposing worlds of a pagan, philosophical education, and a committed Catholic Christian mother. Like my research actors the young Augustine lives in the gap between two languages and cultures. Like my research actors he experiences fragmentation of self-identity caused by this tension. The story of the *Confessions* is his account of moving through this cultural gap and creating his own theory for living, or as I am arguing in these Findings, a “gap theology”, which allows him finally to attain to some sense of unity of self-identity in Christian belief. This “gap theology” is both a theology

that interprets the gap but also a theology that Augustine and my research actors are driven to because of the gap.

I have shown further evidence of fragmentation of self-identity and its causes in my research actors in the Analysis chapter. Doreen, John and Chris's stories show the tensions felt by Christians aware of the gap between their behaviour and relationships in the workplace, and a radical Christian ethic of discipleship. For them the culture of the workplace provides a challenging "other" against which they feel they must measure their Christian performance. The pressure of expectation from church communities on their members is particularly felt in the experience of these research actors, and their sense of fractured self-identity is an on-going tension in their workplace roles. Even in Kay's story where there appears to be little fracture between work and faith identities, there are moments when workplace and faith priorities conflict. Kay's story shows her sense of unified self-identity threatened by misunderstandings or disagreements over priorities, with those who do not share her faith viewpoint. Yet these clashes of values become important points of affirmation of Christian self-identity in Kay's story.

R S Thomas expresses in his poetry a distinctive contemporary exploration of self-identity through his recurring image of the self reflected in a glass. Here too the mystery of spiritual, mental and inborn biological self-identity, and the relationship between them, is considered.

*The poet scans the stars
and the scientist his equations.
Life, how often must I
be brought round to confront*

*my image in an oblique
glass? The spirit revolves
on itself and is without
shadow, but behind*

*the mirror is the twin helix
where the dancing chromosomes
pass one another back
to back to a tune from the abyss.*

(Thomas, 2004, p.66)

Interpretation and alignment of experience

In the process of self-identity definition and discovery of Christian identity, the movement through the sense of division and fragmentation depends on interpretation of experience and alignment of experience to theological and cultural traditions. The research interviews present an opportunity for the research actors to engage actively in this process of interpretation. The analysis of the stories suggests that the adoption of a personal theory or “gap theology” enables some sense of holistic self-identity to be constructed within the experience of fragmentation. In looking more closely at how such theories are developed, it becomes clear that narrative contributes on several levels.

First, there is the canonical understanding of narrative theology (as expounded by Stroup, 1981). Here the research actor aligns his or her experience with tradition and scripture, finds connections and meaning, and adopts a particular understanding of faith based on those connections. Augustine’s *Confessions* is used by Stroup as a classic account of an example of this process. Augustine’s alignment of his experience with the experience of St Paul provides a final proof and moment of certainty in his conversion journey. It is interesting to note too that Augustine in his ministry as Bishop also recognises the importance of telling the Christian narrative to prospective Christians in their catechizing process. In his treatise on “*The catechizing of the uninstructed*” written in about AD400 he gives a definite system and plan for telling the story to someone who has come from a non-Christian background. A structure of “seven ages of the world” is offered as a simple way of presenting the main themes of the story of Christianity for the uninitiated.

“The first is from the beginning of mankind, that is from Adam, who was the first man made, to Noah who made the ark in the flood; and the second extends from that point to Abraham, who was called indeed the father of all nations who should follow his faith, but especially of the people of the Jews that was to arise by descent from his own body; [...] the third age is from Abraham to King David: the fourth from David to that captivity wherein the people of God flitted into Babylonia: the fifth from that flitting to the

coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; after whose coming the sixth age is now passing [...] in this sixth age the human mind may be renewed in the likeness of God” (Augustine, trans Barker, 1912, p.62-63).

The sixth age is our own time as we wait for the Second Coming of Christ and the final judgement. The seventh age is the Sabbath rest – the age of God’s Kingdom. Thus Augustine interprets and reinforces the strong scriptural narrative tradition that he saw as critical in keeping the church free from heresy and faulty interpretations. In an age of pluralism a simple cohesive agreed Christian narrative underpinning belief gives a firm foundation for the growth of the faith.

Linda and Bill both show elements of being shaped by a narrative theology in their stories. Linda draws from a strong narrative of Anglican church tradition in order to construct a deep self-identity that underpins and connects her fragmented daily identities. Bill, in line with the tradition of his church community, takes a particular verse from scripture and creates a personal interpretation for his life that enables him to construct deep self-identity that connects his church identity with his workplace self-identity. In both cases there is deliberate interpretation of the tradition and scripture in order to make their personal theory carry meaning and become workable.

Secondly, in the work of interpretation the personal theory or theology of meaning is shaped in daily experience through the perceived gap between the accepted Christian narrative and the workplace culture. The challenging “other” of the workplace culture may conflict with a sense of belonging to a Christian community and tradition, so that the story-teller’s Christian narrative is shaped in resolving this conflict. The workplace environment with its different values and priorities can therefore be both a place of challenge and growth. It has been noted already that Augustine’s own story in the *Confessions* is shaped partly in conflict with the Catholic narrative and belief of his mother, Monica. The young Augustine not only reacts against the Catholic conformity of his mother

but also struggles to bring together the two opposing influences of his worldly ambition and developing Christian beliefs. An example of this is shown in Doreen's story as she struggles with the conflicting issues of possible staff redundancies and Christian ideas of the value of each colleague as a human being made in God's image. Doreen seeks partial resolution of this tension in an understanding of Christian professionalism based on the parable of the talents (Luke 19 : 11-26). Dis-ease is likely to be felt by believers unless they can find a way to interpret their experience and make meaningful connections. In the analysis of the research stories differences between Christians from differing denominations become clear as the cultural gap between work and church is defined. Bevans' models of contextual theology (2002) illustrate the way that the Christian gospel can be interpreted differently and embedded within diverse settings. Most of my research actors "gap theologies" seem to fall within the definition of the "synthetic model" (pp.88-102). This model suggests that contextual theology is-

"an exercise in true conversation and dialogue with the other so that one's own and one's culture's identity can emerge in the process" (Bevans, 2002, p. 94).

The evidence of the research stories shows that my research actors are in a dialogue with their workplace environment and culture, and that their self-identity is thus shaped by these multiple influences on their thinking.

However, Stan's story illustrates what may happen when the hermeneutical gap between workplace and faith narrative becomes too wide to allow meaningful interpretation. Stan perhaps shows an example of Bevans' "countercultural" model of contextual theology (Bevans, 2002, p.117) – a theology which severely critiques the surrounding culture and maintains the gospel message as challenging and subversive. Stan's story tells of a withdrawal from workplace relationship in order to preserve his sense of deep Christian self-identity. His very particular and specialised church narrative within which he understands his deep self-identity, stands at too great a distance from the workplace narrative. Only one interpretation is possible: the narrative of Christian suffering in the

face of worldly pressure makes sense of Stan's experience. Such a narrative gives authenticity to his particular construction of withdrawal from relationship into isolation. In the light of Augustine's use of narrative theology and his insistence on a standard Christian narrative (see above in *"The catechizing of the uninstructed"*), the challenge to contextualise the gospel for Christians coming from communities where the scriptures play a decisive and central role, continues to be problematical. Augustine's solution is based on the grace-filled, eschatological nature of Christian living (as explored in my theoretical chapter). Christians here live in an in-between state – a neutral secular world and church where true Christians and non-Christians are inter-mixed. Distinctive Christian identity is only seen and known by God, and will only be revealed at the Last Judgement. Meanwhile Christians live by God's grace alone and Augustine's acceptance of "Christian mediocrity" (Markus, 1990, p.65) opens the way for Christians to work out their own salvation in the circumstances of their ordinary, daily lives. Augustine, whilst holding to rigid scriptural narrative in his teaching and exposition, appears to allow space for personal interpretation of that narrative within one's own life and culture. The Bishop perhaps illustrates Bevans' "translation" model of contextual theology (Bevans, 2002, p.37). The gospel message is unchangeable and fixed but can be embedded differently within different settings so that it makes sense in that culture.

Thirdly, within the experience of fragmentation of self-identity there appear to be moments of clarity or revelatory moments, when foundational narratives and interpretation of experience come together and illuminate each other so that personal theories or narratives of self-identity are created, confirmed and strengthened. Experiences causing such moments may be life-changing events (such as bereavement or divorce) or may be sudden insights into a meaning within the foundational narrative (such as Bill's "quiet man" insight). Interpretation of revelatory moments appears critical in the construction of deep self-identity. These moments can be markers in the narrative of self-identity and draw self-unity from fragmentation. In Bill's case his anxiety over his

perceived failure to witness effectively in the workplace, is eased by his revelatory insight. This anxiety, a major cause of fragmentation of self-identity arising from his sense of having rejected part of his foundational faith narrative, is dealt with in his meaning-making interpretation. Theologising the issue helps to lessen his sense of failure. Augustine's story in the *Confessions* is punctuated with moments of insight and revelation as he recounts his journey to faith. It too shows some evidence of the writer using theological interpretation of his experience as a means to step back from his emotion and lessen his own anxiety. There is a sense in which theologising about his feelings allows him to generalise them rather than face them as personal. Augustine's concern to align his story with scripture and show it as an example of Christian redemption, together with his developing theology of total dependence on God's grace, means that he is sometimes able to offer over-neat solutions to his questions about the reasons for his sense of inner division. The story about his response to his mother's death in Book IX is perhaps a good example of this. Sometimes however his theological interpretation allows him to progress significantly in his faith. Augustine's conversion itself is a moment of clarity as he takes hold of faith in order to resolve his inner conflict over his sexual behaviour. Augustine longs for purity of life and vision but is held back (and down in his own eyes) by his sexual desires and habits. In his conversion in the Milanese garden he begins both an intellectual journey towards self-understanding and self-acceptance, but also a voyage of spiritual discovery in his experience of the power of God's grace through faith in Christ. Augustine never afterwards forgets that without God the human will is unable to effect real change in self-identity. His revelatory moment provides the impetus for a new way of living.

Deep self-identity within the fragmentation

My exploration of definitions of self-identity in my theoretical work highlighted two aspects which hold particular meaning in this research. The first is the experience of fragmentation of self-identity which I have been discussing above. The second is the experience of a deep, more unified self-identity which may underlie the fragmentation or be constructed within or from it. My research actors' stories show evidence of this sense of deep self-identity as does Augustine's story. In Book X of the *Confessions* Augustine explores his inner life and finds beyond dualism and fragmentation, a sense of a deep self-identity in his soul and memory. For my research actors however the deep identity is sometimes interpreted as "the real me", sometimes as personality, sometimes as authentic self, sometimes as core of being. For some research actors the deep self-identity is seen as fixed, permanent and given (for example – Doreen and Chris's view of their personality types). For others, the core being is in the process of being discovered or uncovered (for example - Anne and Mark in their continuing self-exploration). For all the actors the deep self-identity is seen as the place where their Christian faith and identity is most meaningful. The deep self-identity is often linked with home, family and intimacy and reflects the root of meaning and purpose in their lives. In Doreen's story, for example, her deep Christian identity and her personality weave together so that she cannot separate them. Her expressed vocation to nursing springs from this deep self – a yearning to devote her working life to service which fulfils her deepest understanding of her own nature. In telling her story Doreen takes a further step in developing her understanding of herself.

The question however arises as to whether this deep self-identity is given and fixed, or constructed and open to development. Rowan Williams maintains that any fixed, given, *a priori* self is a fiction. He insists that even deep self-identity is constructed and developed in the presence of the "other".

"Even when I try to formulate or picture my 'real self', what I am in effect doing is imagining an ideal other, an ideal interlocutor and

observer, a listener to who I am making perfect sense” (Williams, 1997, p. 31).

Williams goes on to explore how God in Jesus is the unchanging and “non-competitive” other with whom we can establish relationship and develop our deepest selves. Whether we are seen as failures or successes in life’s journey, God’s address to us assures us of our status as purposeful beings in the world.

“What God’s regard, as pronounced by Jesus, establishes is my presence as an agent, experiencing and ‘processing’ experience. I continue to be a self in process of being made, being formed in relation and transaction” (Williams, 1997, p. 38).

This view raises the question of whether the idea of a constructed deepest self conflicts with a concept of the soul as given and preserved by God. Augustine speaks of the heart and soul interchangeably when expressing his sense of deepest self. In Book I of the *Confessions* he writes of his soul longing for God, and of yearning for God to speak to his soul. Yet he says that his soul is too small and unworthy for God to come to it (Conf. I, v). God can only be known in the deepest, inmost part of Augustine’s being yet that part of his being is still human, still fallible and still un-Godlike. In neo-platonic tones he examines these tensions in Book X.

“What then do I love when I love my God? Who is he who is higher than the highest element in my soul? Through my soul I will ascend to him” (Conf. X, vii).

Nor does God reside in the deepest recesses of memory although Augustine suggests in Book X that an inborn memory of God resides in human beings’ memories. For Augustine, God is certainly found within and through the mind, but God does not actually reside within human beings. It is in relationship with God, a relationship of heart and mind, that the truest self-identity and satisfaction for the soul is found.

“Augustine reaffirms that the soul is at home only in God, because there alone it is itself, in the love and knowledge of God, held in his hand. [...] to be thus at home is to know oneself in knowing God” (Williams, 1990, p.72).

Thus Augustine paints a picture of the soul as a seeking and yearning inner force. For him the deepest self-identity is not fixed until it finds its fulfilment in a total loving relationship with God. In this understanding the soul is developed through relationship so that the deep self-identity is constructed in a divine/human partnership - an ongoing conversation between God and the believer.

This research accepts the view that deep self-identity is a construction, albeit a foundational one. It suggests too that, out of the experience of division and fragmentation, authentic deep self-identity may be further defined, understood and developed in the workplace experience through the connections of autobiographical narrative. Doreen's story is a good example of this developmental process as she shows increasing awareness of her own deepest self-identity. Telling one's story in the presence of a listener or reader offers an opportunity to interpret one's experience and create a narrative which deepens and unifies self-identity. Deep self-identity is thus constructed in a hermeneutical process involving experience, reflection and action. For Ricoeur, philosopher of identity through narrative-

"lived experience precedes a narrative, and narrative shapes practical action. The complete hermeneutic circle of narrative and action involves a threefold process of prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration" (Ezzy, 1998, p. 244).

Imagination prepares for experience by drawing from foundational narratives, experience aligns itself with the narratives to make meaning, then the memory of the experience is told and interpreted to inform action and adapt the foundational narratives. This hermeneutical process seems to reflect closely the circular structure evidenced in the research actors' stories. They start with memory, align that memory to narratives to make meaning, then imagine future development of self-identity in the light of this interpretation. The power of memory, explored by Augustine in Book X of the *Confessions*, is critical to this process. Memory is experience - interpreted at different points in time. The personal theory, theology or narrative adopted by an individual, shapes and is shaped by

interpreted experience. A sense of deep self-identity is therefore, as Augustine suggests (Conf. X, xvii), constructed from experience through memory. For Augustine the memory of experience of God in worship, scripture and prayer brings God's presence alive within him. (Conf. X, xxv). His soul, which for Augustine is his deepest sense of self-identity, is then most alive in God's presence.

R S Thomas explores a meditative approach to relationship with God in his work. Here he reflects on aging and on his changing, inner experience of the mystery of God's presence and absence, and the resulting change in his understanding of his own self-identity.

Planetary

*There was a place
where we would meet? No,
where I would await
his rising above the mind's
rim, offering my darkness
to his illumination.
Many a night only
his tip showed, at times
not even that. Clouds?
An eclipse? My windows
unclean? I remained
patient. As, on a dull
day, the sun shines
in its own sky, I knew
somewhere beyond the eye's
range he maintained
his fullness; that it was I
getting in my own
way was subject to phases.*

*It is not like that
anymore. It is he who turns
now, presenting,
because of the sharpness
of the light we direct
on him, always
his far side, crepuscular*

*as my mind is at times
but lacking its prospects.*

(Thomas, 2004, p. 307)

Finding an authentic language of self-identity

The research analysis shows that interpretation of traditions is essential in self-identity construction but also that, in the process of coming to self and God knowledge, the challenge of finding a language that expresses authentically (both in the faith narrative and the workplace narrative) one's emerging sense of deep self-identity, is also critical.

“The *Confessions* [...] is concerned with the question[...] ‘How can I live a more authentic life?’ Augustine’s answer to this question is that such authenticity is the effect of increased self-understanding which, in turn, results from daring to speak about ourselves and to hear what we are saying” (Capps & Dittes, 1990, p. 304).

David Burrell in his essay in Capps & Dittes collection (p. 308) suggests that the only way one can speak responsibly and authentically of God is to tell one's own story and show how one's understanding of God has been interwoven with one's personal development. In the *Confessions* Augustine undertakes this demanding exercise. He finds a narrative language, drawn from a combination of his pagan education and his Catholic Christian experience, which tells how he comes to know the Christian God as he simultaneously comes to know and understand himself. The title itself, “*Confessions*”, carries a double meaning –

“of confession as praise as well as of confession as acknowledgement of fault” (Chadwick, 1991, p.ix).

In the process of writing Augustine creates a new kind of theological autobiography and an authentic personal voice. For this reason the *Confessions* have remained a foundational church text.

“Augustine’s *Confessions* remain a classic piece of spiritual writing that speaks to each generation. It reveals an intense relationship with God who was present to Augustine through his friends and other people, and it encourages readers to view their own lives with the same degree of introspection and desire for understanding” (Graham, Walton and Ward, 2005, p.24).

The examples of spiritual autobiography that I have explored in my section on Narrative Theology serve to show that from Augustine onwards autobiographical story becomes an accepted way to explain and interpret the Christian experience of inner life and experience, both for others and for ourselves. Self-identity formation and personal

theology are expressed in the interpretation of God's action in our lives. Woven together these two elements of identity and theology create in our stories an authentic personal language of Christian confession. The research actors' stories reflect this framework of understanding. They seek to express their sense of moving towards deeper knowledge of self-identity as they interpret their experience within their story. Giddens' theory of the "reflexive self" (1991, p. 5) expresses the way that continuous creation and re-creation of coherent autobiographical narrative is central in this process of deep self-identity construction. Finding a workable narrative language is part of establishing coherence and authenticity in self-identity. The research actors' stories demonstrate ways in which finding a personal narrative language works in this process of self-discovery. For Mark, Anne and Jane the Christian tradition of their upbringing stands as an "other" against which they construct their own personal faith understanding. So, where Augustine sees the control of his sexual desires as a battle between two wills, Mark sees control of his addictive tendencies as a conflict between a narrative of personality and the Catholic church narrative of self-control and holiness. He interprets the shame he feels about his addiction as stemming from his Catholic upbringing. Giddens writes that –

"shame bears directly on self-identity because it is essentially anxiety about the adequacy of the narrative by means of which the individual sustains a coherent biography" (Giddens, 1991, p. 65).

Mark questions the efficacy of the Catholic narrative and adopts the narrative language of secular counselling, the contemporary method for self-examination and gaining self-understanding, which recommends self-acceptance as the path to wholeness. Intellectually Mark accepts the secular position, emotionally he feels the judgement of the church narrative. There is an ongoing collision between secular and church narratives. Stroup maintains that –

"Revelation occurs when Christian narrative collides with personal identity and the latter is reconstructed by means of the former" (Stroup, 1981, p. 257).

Mark's experience shows the narrative collision working in the opposite direction – personal meaning reconstructs the Catholic narrative. Nevertheless the collision between opposing narratives of self-understanding has been revelatory both in terms of his faith and in terms of his own self-knowledge. In the face of the “other” of the Catholic tradition a new, less threatening personal faith narrative is constructed. The new narrative of a “spirituality of imperfection” allows for self-acceptance and some resolution of the fragmentation of self-identity. In the workplace setting the new narrative language allows what Mark sees as greater authenticity in his Christian living. Understanding his deep self-identity as imperfect yet accepted and known by God and himself, enables Mark to experience a greater sense of unity of self-identity at work. Personal meaning is found in the re-creation of a coherent Catholic autobiographical narrative.

Moments of crisis, such as life-threatening illness, can also provide focal points for a collision of personal and faith narratives. In Anne's story the narrative of traditional Anglicanism provides an “other” against which she struggles to define her own faith narrative language. Anne sees her experience of church, and the support that the faith community offers, as inadequate in the face of her experiences. The collision of understandings, and a questioning of accepted local norms about what a church community should be, forces her to greater self-knowledge as she re-constructs her personal understanding and faith narrative. In the process of this re-construction Anne incorporates elements of Christian ethics, Buddhism and academic learning theory to create a narrative language of “goodness” that draws all her experience together and makes sense of it. The fragmentation of self-identity in the collision of narratives is resolved in the creation of this new inter-disciplinary narrative – God within me as a source of strength. Deep-self identity and God within thus become intertwined in a self-understanding that provides coherence and stability.

Jane's faith narrative is rooted in the traditional language of the scriptures and liturgies of the Anglican church. It is therefore felt as deeply "other" to the workplace narrative language and seen as standing against it as a benchmark. The distance between the two narratives makes mutual interpretation difficult. The collision between the narratives is felt most keenly in Jane's self-identity. Fragmentation caused by the sense of being under the judgement of the faith narrative creates personal suffering. This pain is internalised and for the most part hidden, yet it could be understood as an unavoidable result of Christian belief, validated by the history of self-sacrifice in the faith tradition. The deep self-identity is expressed in Jane's story either through Cranmerian language or through tears. However, the "otherness" of the historic language of scripture and Prayer Book, and Jane's sense of the Anglican church's long history and wide geographic presence, also has a positive effect in enabling her to stand back from daily events and adopt a longer perspective on the world and workplace. This sense of perspective allows her to make moral sense of the prevailing workplace culture, and strengthens a respected, ethical self-identity amongst her colleagues. Jane has developed an authentic personal language of professional ethics in her workplace setting which bridges the gap between work and faith narratives.

The findings of this research suggest the concept of "confession" of Christian faith can be a means of affirmation of faith for contemporary believers. Stroup writes that "Confession is first-order religious language" (Stroup, 1981, p. 201). He argues that confession is not a language about faith but the language of faith and that it emerges from the narrative encounter between the individual and the narrative faith tradition in which they are set. Stroup understands confession primarily in the sense of a declaration of belief –

"To confess Christian faith is to say in effect, 'I understand who I am in the light of and by means of the faith narratives of the Christian tradition'" (Stroup, 1981, p. 201).

Within this broad interpretation he sees the performance of confession of fault in liturgy as an exercise in understanding. In contrast Hymer, understanding confession primarily as confessing fault argues –

“Religious confessions empower us to express our secrets as we ‘try on’ words [...] Through the use of language, God is said to have created the world. And through the use of language, through self-expression, we create meaning. Religious confessions then not only reflect meaning in the context of institutions and ritualized procedures. Through language we create meaning and recreate ourselves. Confessions can be redemptive” (Hymer, 1995, p. 43).

Both understandings share a sense of creation and re-creation of self-identity through language in the act of confession. Stroup sees the Christian aligning his or her own narrative language with the narrative of the faith tradition and thus finding self-identity. Hymer sees participation in religious language and ritual enabling the construction of self-identity and personal meaning.

So how far can my research actors’ stories also be seen as creative and redemptive “confession” of faith, and further, can confession be a helpful motif in Christian living in our contemporary world? Sadly the concept of confession has become tainted in our postmodern culture with its connotations of celebrity exposes in tabloid newspapers. Social networking websites also encourage their users to bare their souls for all to see online. We live in a culture in which paradoxically many fret about privacy and personal security whilst sharing their lives openly through the internet. Even the healing profession of psychotherapy recommends unveiling one’s innermost fears and desires to the therapist who can then help one to make sense of one’s life. The confession of faith therefore has to be reclaimed from this confused web of associations. I suggest that the process of constructing autobiographical narrative and of finding words and language in which to express one’s interpretation of work/faith experience can be deeply creative, both in self-understanding and also in constructing faith identity. It is also, of course, a deeply personal and often emotional process. In telling one’s own work/faith story, one opens oneself to criticism and judgement from others, and the courage of my

research actors is acknowledged throughout this project. Telling personal stories, of course, also allows the possibility of self-deception and the manipulation of reality for our own ends. RS Thomas, always very aware of this danger, reflects frequently in his verse on how we are susceptible to making God in our own image. For example, in his poem *S.K.*, a tribute to the radical philosopher and theologian Soren Kierkegaard, he asks if -

“his mind was the serpent, insinuator of the heresy of the self as God ?” (Thomas, 2004, p.221).

Graham, Walton and Ward point out in their book on methods of theological reflection that even in the church the Biblical narrative can be interpreted in a huge variety of ways. The story-teller controls the interpretation.

“If the Christian Church is a story-formed community, who determines the way in which the story is told?” (Graham et al, 2005, p.106).

Confession of faith through personal story therefore has its weaknesses and dangers. Nevertheless, I believe that it remains a creative means, when grounded in scripture and used in reflective Christian conversation or community, for gaining self-knowledge and understanding of vocation. In this way my research actors’ stories can, like the *Confessions*, be seen as redemptive. They re-create self-identity through deeper self-understanding.

The ability then to find an authentic personal language is critical in the narrative process of building reflexive self-identity. It is also critical in finding ways to express that self-identity to other human beings. In a socially constructed understanding language is formed in relationship with others and the environment, and through language we construct our reality with others.

“The purpose of language, then, is not so much to represent interior meanings or to derive them from the world outside, but to stake a claim on the world and thus to make it real” (Day, 1993, p. 215).

The language of faith makes belief real but is also experienced as a divisive influence on self-identity in my research actors' stories. Mark and Anne both bemoan the fact that it is almost impossible to speak of their Christian beliefs in the workplace. Mark tells in his story of how his behaviour is affected by how he feels about himself and his relationship with God. He cannot however share this sense of vulnerability or joy with colleagues at work –

“they wouldn’t understand what I was talking about.”

Instead he sees his Christian role as one of accompaniment of colleagues in their own quests for meaning and self-identity. A language of shared, open enquiry becomes his way of speaking of faith in the academic environment and sharing his deepest sense of self. In Anne’s story she too expresses frustration and anger at the divide between the understanding of religious language by believers and non-believers.

“Others will say they are very religious – well I would never say I was at all religious but I would like to say that I’m a Christian and the two are so different aren’t they – but if you don’t actually have any faith you can’t understand it.”

Unless theological language is used within a shared context of faith, it seems almost impossible to share understanding. Bruner agrees that the meaning of language and narrative can only be grasped where there is knowledge of the cultural context –

“I believe that we shall be able to interpret meanings and meaning-making in a principled manner only in the degree to which we are able to specify the structure and coherence of the larger contexts in which specific meanings are created and transmitted” (Bruner, 1990, p.64).

The language of Christian faith can thus only draw its meaning from the narrative of the Christian community. It is a language that brings the community into being and holds it together.

“Religious terms, such as belief, mean what they do not because they refer to things in an otherwise independent mind but because of what they accomplish in social life” (Day, 1993, p. 215).

So the language of the Christian community is essential within the life of the church but it can also be exclusive. In the workplace setting it can become almost incomprehensible to outsiders. Anne, therefore, drawing

from her own interpretation of her belief, develops a deliberate faith articulation of her own, based on the Christian narrative of love and forgiveness, which centres round active acceptance and compassion for those around her. This language of action allows her to feel that she is communicating meaningfully with colleagues and students and expressing an authentic self-identity.

In her thesis “Speaking of faith at work: a Trinitarian hermeneutic” (2008), Margaret Whipp also reflects on the complex challenge for Christians in a secular workplace of becoming “fluent” in a workplace faith language. She acknowledges both the possibility of vulnerability and creative potential for the Christian at work.

“This challenge demands not only a sophisticated level of pragmatic skill and hermeneutic sensitivity in relation to language, but also a detailed and critical awareness of power and a radical openness of personal identity. I have suggested that the Christian-at-work, in faithfully ‘translating herself’, can become a practical embodiment and grace-filled expression of the kenotic-creative-pentecostal love of the Holy Trinity” (Whipp, 2008, p. 168).

Whipp suggests in her thesis that personal, do-it-yourself theologies may be too insubstantial to support the development of such fluent faith language and embodied Christian presence in the workplace. She recommends that collaborative groups of lay Christians should meet in their church communities in order to share experience and support each other. Shared theological reflection will aid the building of Christian identity. Whilst this research agrees that such church collaboration, possibly through chaplaincy networks in a university, might be helpful in sustaining workplace Christian identity, it suggests too that reflective construction of one’s personal work/fait h story, with or without the support of a church community, can be creative of deep self-identity and an authentic, fluent personal language of Christian confession.

R S Thomas reflects on his increasing awareness of the gulf between his words of faith and God's presence with him. The only unchanging element in the fragmentation of his world is the sense of God's voice calling to his spirit. Faith however always requires an attempt to find a language for its expression.

Space Walking

*You, the bridge builder,
will you lay me down
a causeway between us
over the gulf I have come
to? What depths such as
the soul's, with yourself
always on the far
side? I have seen
my prayers fall one by one
into that chasm, and faith
was a plank too narrow
for me to tread. Walking
time's sea I have faltered
like Peter, unable
to believe you had arms
to sustain me. And now
the old stories are
done. There is no saviour
walking the waves. Matter
has become the physicist's
myth. Vertigo
is but the mind reeling
momentarily before its own
space. There is only
your voice now summoning
within interstices*

*of the machine not the flesh
but the spirit to launch
itself forth over the verbal deeps.*

(Thomas, 2004, p.311)

A moral framework for action

Expressing one's faith through certain behaviours becomes an authentic way of expressing Christian self-identity in the workplace for some of the research actors like Anne above, since expression through language is problematical. However, for believers in the workplace finding an appropriate ethical mode of behaviour may be challenging. A moral framework is needed which makes sense both in faith terms and in workplace terms. From the research actors' stories it seems that the creation of a moral framework for action becomes necessary in the process of constructing deep self-identity in their workplace narrative. Such a framework is developed within and in response to the surrounding prevailing culture. Action within the framework can further develop the sense of deep self-identity within the fragmentation of the workplace setting.

Again, Augustine's *Confessions* and his later theology provide examples of a person struggling to develop a moral framework which carries power and meaning within a changing culture. Augustine lived at a time when the culture of the Roman world was undergoing huge changes. Pagan religions and the high culture of philosophy were being gradually undermined by the growing force of Christianity.

“Augustine is symptomatic of the cultural problem that occurs when the culture bearers themselves lose trust in the efficacy of their culture. [...]The thoughtful individual experiencing this shock, no longer able to find the answers for his life in the given ones of his culture, suddenly faces immense tasks in reorienting himself” (Weintraub, 1978, p.26).

The *Confessions* is a narrative recording of Augustine's memories of reorienting himself around a new Christian vocation. His rejection of Manicheism illustrates how he comes to lose faith in the pagan cultures of his day. Augustine is disappointed by Faustus and his inability to answer difficult questions about the writings of Mani. He comes to Milan and is, in contrast, impressed by the skill and learning of Bishop Ambrose.

“My pleasure was in the charm of his language. It was more learned than that of Faustus, but less witty and entertaining, as far as the manner of his speaking went. But in content there could be no comparison. Through Manichee deceits Faustus wandered astray. Ambrose taught the sound doctrine of salvation” (Conf. V, xiii).

Augustine is searching for a meaningful faith that provides a moral framework within which he can find stability and inner peace. He finds it in the Catholic Christianity of his day and as his career in the church progresses, he uses his former experience as pagan and philosopher to further interpret Christian doctrine and create a new workable framework for the relationship between the old pagan world and the new Christian one. Augustine becomes a creator of culture in his work in *City of God*. Here he argues for a church that remains part of the world and a Christianity that allows its members to play their part in worldly society. In the space of time between the present day and God’s Last Day, the saeculum, Christians set their values by their love of God, the values of the heavenly city, but live under the laws and customs of the earthly city. A demanding moral framework is offered to believers who set their sights on God’s city, but failure to live up to this standard is inevitable and to be expected. God’s grace alone gives the power to become a citizen of the heavenly city, and repentance and humility must be the continual attitude of the earth-bound Christian. Augustine thus sets a framework, a virtue narrative, within which Christians can understand and express their faith identity in their daily life setting. This is in contrast, as has been noted in my theoretical work, to Augustine’s opponents - the Donatists and Pelagians. Followers of these doctrines expected Christian perfection now in this world in order to qualify for the next. Augustine had a more realistic view of human potential based on his own life’s experience.

In our own time we also face immense change in our Western culture based historically on the meta-narrative of Christianity, and the stories of my research actors reflect something of this uncertainty. Christians can be seen perhaps, because they still live within the faith tradition, as a remnant of a former culture. They are culture bearers who have to re-

evaluate their faith narratives in order to thrive in the postmodern world. In a sense they are living in a reverse situation to Augustine – he was struggling in the move from a pluralistic world to a Christian one – they are challenged by a move from a Christian-based society to a pluralistic one. In her story Anne reflects on her experience as a local magistrate –

“I think my faith has been challenged not by the apparent evil that people do, but by the absence of Christianity that has resulted in them acting this way.”

It is a lack of knowledge about the Christian narrative and its moral framework that shocks Anne rather than the wrongdoing itself.

Some of my research actors tell stories of their search for Christian virtues and a moral framework that carry both personal meaning and public recognition within the workplace environment. There is evidence of a strong desire to share community with workplace colleagues and work to shared values. Doreen’s repeated anxiety about appearing as a “normal” person rather than an “odd” Christian reveals the cultural pressure that she feels. She experiences a division between her faith narrative and her workplace narrative - a fragmentation of self-identity. This becomes more acute as she leaves the Anglican church of her upbringing and absorbs a more demanding Baptist church tradition. Her existing moral framework has to be re-evaluated. MacIntyre believes that the contemporary postmodern culture of “liberal or bureaucratic individualism” has developed a very different view of virtue to that of Christian culture. Within this new culture –

“conceptions of the virtues become marginal and the tradition of the virtues remains central only in the lives of social groups whose existence is on the margins of the central culture” (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 225).

He argues too that any specific account of the virtues has to be based within a narrative framework and lived in the unity of a human life (p.243). No framework of virtues or morals floats free from a belief system. Doreen’s experience of tension between workplace and church cultures, whilst contributing to her sense of fragmentation of self-identity, is evidence of her deeply embedded moral framework at odds with the

workplace culture. Her authentic or deep Christian self-identity is held in this framework and her new Baptist tradition is highlighting just how deeply her self-identity is dependent on it. She experiences living between two worlds – the world of work and the world of faith. Like Augustine in *City of God* she becomes very aware of the eschatological tension at the heart of Christian belief – belonging in this world and belonging in God's kingdom.

John's story reveals someone struggling to combine the divergent cultures of workplace, church and family life. Moulded by a traditional Anglican upbringing and education, John's moral and cultural framework is challenged by his experience of workplace and family demands. In his story he speaks of being always "in the fast lane" as his self-identity faces fragmentation under the pressure of multiple responsibilities. Giddens writes –

"In many modern settings, individuals are caught up in a variety of differing encounters and milieux, each of which may call for different forms of 'appropriate' behaviour" (Giddens, 1991, p.190).

John's sense of being pushed along through life faster than he really wishes to go is evidence of Giddens' argument that multiple pressures may result in a sense of powerlessness over one's life trajectory (p.193). The individual feels out of control because of all the factors influencing his life. John's self-identity faces fragmentation as he attempts to interpret and assimilate diverse influences into his moral and cultural framework. To cope with this he adapts the framework in order to create a workable sense of Christian self-identity in each area of his life. At work this identity is seen as professionalism, at home it plays out as a dependable, devoted father, in church it shows as a regular, committed attendee. The areas are separated in his narrative construction in order to allow separate development of identity in each. This is John's way of reorienting his personal narrative so that it draws from the narrative of his upbringing but can also cope with the very different narrative cultures within which he now lives. Professionalism is a virtue in the new workplace narrative culture as it embodies reliability and responsibility.

John interprets the Christian meta-narrative within the workplace setting, understanding expression of Christian self-identity as accountability to employer, reliable working, reasonable ambition and self-fulfilment. These are virtues which are understood both in the narrative of his upbringing and in the workplace culture. They enable John to succeed in his career, to have a sense of living an authentic, deep self-identity at work, and also to share the value structure of workplace colleagues.

Culture and tradition go hand in hand in understanding narrative histories. The research actors' stories are products of cultural history and denominational church traditions. Their moral framework is formed in this variety mix of narratives.

"I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?'" (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 216).

Though all the research actors are Christian believers, there are deep differences in their understandings of the faith inherited from their denominational traditions. For example, the conversion narrative which informs Chris's story is part of an evangelical church tradition that understands Christian faith as a radical turning away from the culture of the world to a "what would Jesus do?" culture based on the New Testament. Chris's account shows how this tradition, and the moral framework that arises from it, play out in a workplace based life story. Expressing Christian self-identity in the collision between a radical Christian culture and the workplace culture requires courage and self-confidence. Anxiety about Christian performance can soon set in as the first enthusiasm of conversion fades and fragmentation of self-identity is experienced. The tradition of conversion to radical Christian behaviour becomes almost unworkable in the workplace setting. It becomes theoretical unless the radical elements can be interpreted to make sense in the work culture. MacIntyre argues that a living tradition is –

"always partially constituted by an argument about the goods the pursuit of which gives to that tradition its particular point and purpose" (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 222).

Chris's lived experience of the conversion tradition suggests that it contains a fixed understanding of the goods that flow from it. In the workplace these goods require argument and interpretation in order to make them meaningful. The sense of living out a deep Christian self-identity, in the face of an unsympathetic culture, can be lost in the attempt to live within a fixed or un-interpretable tradition. There are echoes here of Augustine's concerns with the doctrines of Donatism where the boundaries of true Christian living are set by over-narrow and over-demanding expectations. The Donatists taught an exclusive type of Christianity defined by legalism, ritual purity and separation from the world. Augustine believed that such a closed and static church could never be the true missionary church of God.

Here R S Thomas reflects on the operation of two opposing and unequal value systems and his own sense of disillusionment with the ways of the world.

Mischief

*'Oh', he said, 'I have lived with nothingness
so long it has lost its meaning'.
I have said 'yes' to the universe
so many times its echoes
have returned increasingly as 'no'.
I have developed my negatives
of the divine and preserved their technicolour
in a make-believe album. I realise
the imagination is alive only
in an oxygenated world. The truth
is less breath-taking than the vacuum
into which it withdraws. But against
all this I have seen the lamb
gambolling for a moment, as though
life were a good thing. This, I have said,
is God's roguery, juggling
with the scales, weighting the one
pan down with evil piled
upon evil then sending it suddenly
sky-high with in the other a tear
fallen from the hardest of eyes.*

(Thomas, 2004, p.249)

Encounter and vocation

The analysis of the research actors' stories and of Augustine's story shows a final movement in the journey inwards towards greater self and God knowledge. I suggest that the research actors and Augustine encounter themselves and God as they understand their personal story as responsive Christian action in their own world setting. In constructing and hearing their own stories, new understanding of deep self-identity and a sense of vocation may be found.

Encounter and relationship are central concepts in the belief and practice of Christian faith. In the Analysis chapter I have shown how Augustine recounts in the *Confessions* his growing realisation of God's presence in his life and his accompanying sense of wonder at encounter with the Divine. The mystery of this relationship is not easy to put into words but my research actors' stories also show moments where the encounter with God shapes and deepens their Christian self-identity. For example, John's account of his anger, first in his youth in Kenya and then later, in mid-life, in the university, illustrates a point of encounter with meaning. Telling his story makes him link the two occasions for the first time and the resulting insight is seen as a moment of spiritual awakening. Another example might be Jane's tears as she recounts her work/faith story. That emotion perhaps represents an admission that encounter with God is a powerful force in her life.

However, the research actors' stories pose a question about the reality of encounter with God and other Christians within the community of the church. Jane and Anne for example both have a distant relationship with the institutional church yet they both show a strong sense of Christian self-identity and belief. Other actors, such as Mark and Stan, critique their churches. Mark longs for more Christian community in his church. Stan finds the teachings in his community have become too restrictive and stifle his development. Even Kay, with her sense of unified work/faith identity feels that she belongs more with the workplace community than the church community because "I do more real things with them". The

analysis of the research stories highlights the challenge that the actors face in establishing meaningful church-based encounter with God and with other Christians. The emphasis for most of them is on finding the right church community – a church within which they can feel at home and feel supported. This research did not set out to examine the relationship of workplace Christians with their church communities but it seems that for some of the research actors the institutional churches have failed to enable them to fully develop their faith. Though all the stories are grounded firmly in the Christian meta-narrative there are wide variations in the levels of loyalty shown to the research actors' church communities.

A sense of awareness of encounter with God leads to a fresh awareness of vocation. The hearing and responding to Christ's call to discipleship lies at the heart of the Christian faith. The *Confessions* are Augustine's own account of his somewhat circuitous response to God's call. For Augustine this journey to God is also a journey inwards towards self-understanding.

“Where was I when I was seeking for you? You were there before me, but I had departed from myself. I could not even find myself, much less you” (Conf. V,ii).

Here Augustine shows an understanding of vocation in its broadest sense. The call is as much about finding self as about finding God. Such vocation becomes a critical influence in the construction of self-identity. As my research actors tell their stories of their work/faith experience they, like Augustine, look back and interpret their workplace experience in the light of their faith. Their past actions may be seen in a new light as they tell their story. Relationships with workplace colleagues and opportunities for career advancement may be interpreted as occasions of response or non-response to God's call. The creation of autobiographical narrative provides a hermeneutical process for understanding both self-identity and Christian calling more deeply. Moreover the contrast between a faith understanding of their story and a

non-faith understanding may illuminate the distinctiveness of Christian vocation.

My research actors have to face the challenging question about how different and how distinctive a Christian should be compared to workplace colleagues. For example, Doreen worries about being a “normal” person instead of an “abnormal” Christian. Mark worries that he “lets the side down a bit” when he swears at work. Jane worries that she is “using” Christianity instead of living it. In reaching across the work/faith divide, interpretation of the faith narrative becomes necessary and compromises have to be made. Yet it remains a question – how different should a Christian be, and how can a distinctive Christian self-identity be expressed and maintained in the workplace environment? Augustine’s theology of “two loves” suggests one way of answering this question. He transfers something of the neo-platonic dualistic belief in the need to concentrate on the life of the soul in order to ascend to higher levels of being, into the Christian injunction to love God before all else, and one’s neighbour as oneself. The resulting theology, expounded in *City of God*, offers two choices – love of God and contempt of self, or love of self and self-glorification.

“The one city loves its own strength shown in its powerful leaders; the other says to its God, ‘I will love you, my Lord, my strength’ (*City of God*, XIV, 28).

Christian distinctiveness is for Augustine in the attitude of the heart above all – in the deepest human desire. He knows however the weakness of the human will, the need for God’s grace and the importance of repentance.

“Our righteousness itself, too, though genuine, in virtue of the Ultimate Good to which it is referred, is nevertheless only such as to consist in the forgiveness of sins rather than in the perfection of virtues” (*City of God*, XIX, 27).

For Augustine the Christian has a different perspective to the non-believer from which to view life – an eschatological perspective. This life is preparation for eternal life with God and will always be a time of compromise with worldly values, but the deepest identity developed in

loving and desiring God here will continue to be recognisable in the heavenly city to come.

McFadyen agrees with Augustine that Christian distinctiveness is seen in the giving of one's life in response to a call from God. He argues that such self-giving runs counter to contemporary cultural norms of self-direction and self-reliance.

“The need to stand upon one's right to maintain an identity which is inalienable (self-enclosed and non-transcendent) is based on the understanding that all manipulation and use by others must be resisted in order to remain an integrated and secure centre. Christ's call and His presence both reconstitute and transform individuals as they respond to Him as persons who claim no rights as inalienably their own” (McFadyen, 1990, p. 152).

In this context deep self-identity is only created and expressed in response to God's call and the needs of other human beings. It is summed up in the scriptural injunction –

“if a man will let himself be lost for my sake, he will find his true self. What will a man gain by winning the whole world, at the cost of his true self?” (Matt. 16:25-26, New English Bible).

As the research actors look back and interpret their past workplace actions as part of a personal Christian story, such insights can be powerful elements in the construction of confident Christian self-identity. Some of my research actors speak of service to others in the workplace being an integral part of their understanding of their Christian self-identity. Jane, for example, speaks of seeing management itself as “part of service”. Mark speaks of trying to be alongside colleagues in the workplace to assist them in articulating their self-identity and values.

It is in Kay's story that the sense of responding to God's call provides such coherence in her work/faith narrative and in her sense of self-identity. At an early age she feels God's call to nursing and from then on, prepares herself to fulfil that vocation. The vocational message of scripture is interpreted in her career and work life as a commitment to nursing and teaching as care and service to others. She looks back at her working life and has a clear understanding of her whole life as action

in response to God's call. Kay's work/faith narrative shows minimal evidence of fragmentation of self-identity. I suggest this is partly because of her clear vocational understanding which permits her to see her working life as God's work, and partly because of the surviving Christian ethos in the nursing profession. She is able to construct and express her deep self-identity more openly in the workplace setting because the language of vocational service is still understood in the discourse of the nursing profession. The workplace culture is still informed by the Christian meta-narrative perhaps because of the elements of care and service to others in the work. Interestingly, two others of the research actors, Doreen and Anne, also speak of a sense of vocation to nursing, even though they are currently employed in other jobs. Nursing is seen by them as a work environment within which deep and unified self-identity can be constructed and expressed. However, there are moments of dissonance even in Kay's story. It is noticeable that she speaks of a series of disagreements with managers throughout her working life. These seem to stem from misunderstandings about motives or priorities for action. These incidents suggest collisions between workplace and faith narratives although Kay herself does not interpret them as such.

Part of coming to know oneself is coming to know and appreciate one's strengths and weaknesses. Again, as the research actors look back and tell their stories they make judgements about success and failure in their working lives. Autobiographical narrative allows them to interpret and understand how their success or failure has affected their Christian self-identity development. For some workplace development is seen also as faith development. Work may provide a discipline within which deep self-identity and talents are created and discovered. Growth and development of skills and human potential are themes that run through Kay's story. Her vocational narrative values human beings highly because they are understood as children of God and capable of spiritual development. Human talents are seen as God's gifts for use in the service of others. For Kay, construction of deep-self identity seems to lie in the recognition and use of talents in order to reach full human

potential. Such an understanding seems close to contemporary management development theories which encourage personal development in the workplace. These theories suggest that workplace performance is enhanced if employees are developing and finding self-realisation in their work. Charles Handy's book "The Empty Raincoat" (1994) has already been mentioned as a classic example of such management theory. Miroslav Volf points out the crucial difference in the Christian narrative – gifts of the Spirit should result in fruit of the Spirit.

"In a pneumatological understanding of work, the development of human beings through their work is, therefore, taken out of the domain of the individualistic search for self-actualization and put in the context of concern for God's new creation" (Volf, 1991, p. 131).

Volf sees the value of human beings gifted for and developed through work in an eschatological light. The gifts of the Spirit are given to enhance Christ's Body on earth, the church, and enable the coming Kingdom of God. The language of personal strengths, gifts and self-identity therefore takes on different meanings in workplace and Christian narratives. Again, the personal work/faith narratives of my research actors allow them to look back and interpret and understand God's gifting in the action of their stories. Autobiographical narrative construction offers an opportunity to connect self-realisation with faith development and create a more holistic sense of self-development and self-identity and in the workplace.

Yet vocation from God, and human beings' response to that call, remains at heart a mystery which can only be explored by each individual believer within the parameters of the faith narrative, culture and environment in which they are set.

RS Thomas reminds us that those who respond to the mystery of God's call cannot be sure of safe arrival at their destination.

Migrants

*He is that great void
we must enter, calling
to one another on our way
in the direction from which
he blows. What matter
if we should never arrive
to breed or to winter
in the climate of our conception?*

*Enough we have been given wings
and a needle in the mind
to respond to his bleak north.
There are times even at the Pole
when he , too, pauses in his withdrawal,
so that it is light there all night long.*

(Thomas, 2004, p. 204)

To sum up my findings, I suggest that this study answers my research questions and offers new significance to the study of autobiographical narrative construction of self-identity in Christian believers. Firstly I asked whether my research actors as Christian believers in a secular workplace setting, experience a sense of division and fragmentation of self-identity. The evidence from the research has shown that as self-awareness develops through the story-telling exercise, awareness of dualisms existing between work identity and faith identity and of a sense of fragmentation of self-identity become apparent in my research actors. Secondly, I asked how such division and fragmentation of self-identity is expressed, and thirdly whether it prevents the development of any sense of deep self-identity in the workplace setting. I suggest that the process of growing self-awareness which I have delineated in this chapter answers these two questions. The research seems to suggest that the challenge of dealing with division and fragmentation of self-identity in the workplace can be creative of a sense of deep, more unified self-identity. It seems that for some of my research actors the experience of fragmentation enables rather than prevents the development of their sense of a cohesive Christian work/faith self-identity.

This then is a brief theoretical overview of the process uncovered during this research.

- The process begins with the question – “who am I?” One way to answer is through constructing an autobiographical narrative.
- The stories show the actors becoming aware of division and fragmentation of self-identity as they speak of themselves and their faith in the workplace setting. The presence of an “other” as listener assists in the clarification process.
- The actors interpret their experience aligning it to their theological and cultural traditions, as they seek to construct a personal

work/faith narrative that makes meaningful connections within the fragmentation of self-identity. A personal theory of the meaning of faith in their environment or a personal theological understanding of the gap between faith and workplace reality (a “gap theology”) is developed.

- The actors struggle to find a personal language that expresses authentically (both in their faith narrative and in their workplace narrative) the sense of a deep self-identity that emerges from their interpretation of the fragmentation.
- The actors create a moral framework for action that enables them to sustain a sense of deep self-identity within their workplace narrative.
- The actors encounter themselves, others and the mystery of God’s presence as they understand their story as responsive Christian action in the workplace setting. The sense of a deep self-identity is confirmed and strengthened.

The final point offers an understanding of vocation that may give new meaning to sustaining Christian self-identity in the workplace.

I examine the significance of this process in the following concluding chapter.

Chapter 6 Conclusions

The aim of doctoral study is to develop and extend knowledge, and this thesis seeks to contribute to knowledge in the understanding of narrative construction of Christian self-identity. The research sets out first of all to explore the construction and expression of self-identity in a sample of lay Christians working in a contemporary workplace. My own experience as a Christian believer of maintaining a cohesive work/faith self-identity, and my observations of and conversations with other Christian colleagues, were the two key drivers behind the project. It seemed to me that maintaining an holistic self-identity is an enormous challenge for contemporary working Christians. Moreover there seems to have been little study carried out on the issues and I identified this as a possible gap in knowledge which my own research results might begin to fill. My initial research hypothesis therefore suggested that Christians in a secular workplace may suffer a sense of division between their workplace and faith personas, and that they may consequently experience fragmentation of self-identity. Further I hypothesised that this sense of inner division would be destructive of any sense of deep, unified self-identity in their workplace setting. I decided to test my hypothesis through a narrative research methodology which entailed listening to the work/faith stories of my research actors.

St. Augustine of Hippo became an important influence in the study as I sought ways of rooting my work in a theological epistemology. His *Confessions* have provided both a benchmark autobiographical account of a Christian inner life, and also key theological ideas which together with my reading on self-identity have shaped my conceptual framework. Narrative, which began as methodology, soon also became part of the phenomenon under study. It became clear as the research progressed that the actual telling or writing of the story of one's faith experiences can be a critical element in the process of self-identity construction and expression. My conceptual framework was built therefore from four recurring themes in the literature. It seemed from my reading that where

there is an experience of self-identity fragmentation, autobiographical narrative may contribute to self-identity construction in these ways – through helping to develop theories or theologies to create meaning from one’s experience; through assisting in the path to deeper self-understanding through introspection and interpretation; through offering moral narrative frameworks within which one can operate, and through enabling interpretation of encounter and relationship with others and with God. This conceptual framework has underpinned my theoretical work, my analysis of the research stories and my findings. It has been critical in shaping my thesis and contributes to the uniqueness of this project. My literature review seeks to bring Augustine’s ideas into contact with more contemporary thinkers, bringing theological, sociological, psychological and philosophical ideas together, and resulting in a framework which has allowed me to explore the stories of work/faith experience from new perspectives. Throughout my thesis I have also used the poetry of priest –poet R S Thomas as a contemporary counter-weight to the words of Augustine and to provide alternative reflective meaning in the work.

My research questions developed from my hypothesis about Christians experiencing a sense of division and fragmentation of self-identity in their workplace setting. I asked firstly whether such fragmentation does really occur and if so, how it is expressed in these Christians’ work/faith self-identity. Finally I asked whether any such fragmentation prevents the development of a sense of deep, unified self-identity for Christians in the secular workplace. My Analysis chapter shows the results of my research interviews. Here I have shown the evidence of dualistic thinking in my research actors’ stories as they separate the outer life of the workplace from the inner life of faith and church. Beyond that the stories have also shown a deeper sense of fragmentation of self-identity as my research actors struggle to make sense of their Christian faith and narrative within their workplace culture and narrative. Denomination, culture, personal relationships and life’s challenges all play their part in this experience of fracture. I have placed the analysis of the stories alongside analysis of Augustine’s story in the *Confessions*. The themes

of the conceptual framework have enabled me to draw out particular elements of Augustine's thinking and show how it matches or differs from my actors' thinking.

My Analysis chapter shows in detail how my research actors responded to the question – "Please tell me the story of your life in the workplace as a Christian". Agar and Hobbs' narrative method (1982) seeks coherence in the stories and allows the identification of key elements of meaning. Thematic coherence shows the underlying attitudes, assumptions, values and thus the self-identity presented by the story-teller. This method enabled me to identify similarities and differences between the stories. Although they were far from identical I was able to group the stories under the themes of the conceptual framework which provided a way of making meaning and creating a research text. Narrative provides rich material for analysis and each story contributed its own unique interpretation of the work/faith experience. I have tried in my research analysis to preserve the individuality of each research actor whilst also making links between the stories. My second narrative analysis method (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) gave further insights into the stories showing how the story-telling exercise reveals threads of meaning which contribute to the self-identity portrayed. The two methods tended to confirm each other and both drew out the evidence of fragmentation of self-identity in the stories. This particular methodology also contributes to the unique nature of this research project.

The final part of my hypothesis and my last research question were concerned with the possibility that the experience of fragmentation might prevent workplace Christians from developing any sense of deep, unified self-identity in their work setting. Here my hypothesis has been disproved and the research question answered in a way that has surprised me. It seems from my findings that the reflective process of autobiographical narrative can contribute to deep, self-identity being constructed within and through the experience of fragmentation. This movement from fragmentation to unity seems to depend on an ability to interpret one's

story within both the workplace and Christian narratives, and make meaningful connections between the two.

My Findings chapter explores my discoveries in more depth. Here the themes of my conceptual framework develop into elements in a process of self-identity construction as my analysis is drawn together with the theoretical and Augustinian background material. I discuss how Augustine and my research actors show themselves becoming aware of their own inner dualisms and fragmentation, and the causes of this sense of fragmentation for Christians in the contemporary workplace. The question “Who am I?” answered in the face of an “other” – listener or reader, leads to this process of growing self-awareness. The personal narrative develops as experience and memory are interpreted through the lenses of belief, culture, family and workplace. Though the workplace experience tends to induce division and a sense of fragmentation of self-identity, my research actors show a desire and determination to find and retain a sense of deep, unified self-identity within this. As with Augustine and R S Thomas, the experience of fragmentation and questioning is creative in the development of faith. This creativity seems to come to the fore in the autobiographical narrative process.

In answering my research questions I have developed the following concepts. Firstly, the search for cohesive self-identity in the workplace may lead to the development of a “gap theology” – a personal interpretation of the Christian narrative that makes sense of the gap between one’s workplace experience and one’s own faith narrative. I have stated that this is close to the understanding of the “synthetic” model of contextual theology as described by Bevans in his 2002 work. He maintains that there is something “that is a constant in Christian identity” (p.94) but that theology must always be subject to constant change. Bevans critiques the model for being in danger of “selling out” the Christian faith or appearing “wishy-washy” (p. 95) but I would contend that the “gap theology” is actually an attempt to do the reverse. My research actors are struggling not to “sell-out” their faith but rather to

make it liveable and real within their workplace setting. Like Augustine seeking to bring together his classical pagan education and all its influences, with the essence of the Christian gospel, so that he and his friends can find meaning and life in this new belief narrative – so my research actors stand between two worlds and draw them together in their own experience and stories. What emerges may be personal but it is also rooted deeply in all cases in the Christian narrative. More importantly the theology that emerges in my research actors' stories enables Christian living and the development of a sense of authentic Christian self-identity in the workplace.

From this “gap theology” a new language of faith is developed by the research actors. It is a language or voice that expresses their emerging sense of deep self-identity in their stories, and it is a language that tries to express self-identity authentically in both the workplace and the faith setting. Augustine again points the way here. His *Confessions* are, in his own time, a new way of writing and self-expression, and a link between the classical world and our own world. Augustine's self-examination through his own conversion story becomes a foundation stone in modern Western literature influencing autobiography and the rise of the novel. It is, as I have said, quoting McFague Teselle (1974) an exercise in “parabolic theology” where the theology is expressed and worked out through the story of the theologian. In my work on narrative theology in my Theoretical Perspectives chapter I have explored several examples of spiritual autobiography – individual voices finding a true language of Christian confession that expresses both their personal faith and their own deepest self-identity. I believe that my research actors are themselves theologians creating a contemporary language of faith, each in their own way, which enables them to confess their faith authentically in their workplace setting. Their stories show how some of them have progressed further in this development of a narrative of contemporary confession than others – but all show that desire to be able to speak authentically of themselves as people of faith within the secular workplace narrative. I suggest that a twenty first century exploration of

the motif of confession of Christian faith could be a means of finding fresh meaning in living the faith in a secular, pluralistic world.

Authentic Christian action goes alongside authentic confession of faith. The process of experiencing a sense of deep self-identity within the secular setting depends on the construction of a personal moral framework and narrative. This moral framework has to make sense both in the life of faith and in the life of the surrounding secular culture. Augustine here again gives an insight into this challenge. He develops in *City of God* a virtue narrative which makes sense of the new culture within which Christians of his age found themselves. His narrative depends on an eschatological belief stance – Christians live in this world and are subject to its laws and customs but set their values by the standards of God’s heavenly city. Inevitably there will be failure to live up to such high standards but the Christian lives by God’s grace alone and can never earn a place in the City of God anyway. This virtue narrative allows space for both the Christian longing for perfection and the reality of human living in the world – a Christian “mediocrity” (Markus, 1990, p.65). Within this eschatological narrative Augustine shows that some degree of unified Christian self-identity between world and faith can be experienced. Likewise my research actors seek moral frameworks that allow authentic self-identity expression in their faith and their workplace. Such frameworks represent a compromise position between work and faith values. They are successful and satisfying when the values are tacitly agreed between Christian and non-Christian colleagues. Professionalism, for instance, becomes an example of a virtue narrative in the university setting which is able to hold together both faith and workplace values, and provide a meaningful framework within which authentic Christian action and self-identity may be expressed.

The process of growing self-awareness through narrative shows a further step in the development of deep, unified self-identity. There are moments in my research actors’ stories when the mystery of God’s action in their lives is recounted and deep self-identity is confirmed in personal

vocational understanding. Augustine's story in the *Confessions* shows his faith developing through a series of incidents and experiences which he interprets as God's action in his life. As he comes to understand himself he also comes to understand his vocation, his potential and his relationships with others. Love of God increasingly shapes his self-identity, and again an eschatological perspective allows him to interpret and make sense of his experience of the power of human desire in his theology of "two loves" (*City of God*, XIV). So too with my research actors - reflecting on the work/fait h relationship within their stories they become increasingly aware of the distinctiveness of their Christian calling and the way that it has in the past shaped their self-identity and their workplace behaviour and attitudes. The theology of "two loves" is real in their experience as they appreciate, interpret and understand their struggle to be people of faith in a non-faith setting. There is no easy resolution of this tension between their two worlds, yet vocational understandings of their personal narratives provide a means of affirming their sense of deep Christian self-identity in their workplace setting.

This process of movement through division and fragmentation of self-identity to development of a sense of deep, more unified self-identity in the construction of autobiographical narrative provides an answer to my final research question and disproves my initially pessimistic hypothesis about Christian self-identity in a secular workplace. It appears from the evidence of my research actors' stories that interpretation both of the Christian and the workplace narrative is necessary in order bring unity out of fragmentation. The workplace Christian stands between two worlds and in their own story and life brings those two worlds together. Each creates in their story, or begins to create, a "gap theology", a personal language of confession, a virtue narrative and a vocational understanding that shapes and expresses their Christian faith and affirms their sense of deep self-identity in their workplace. I suggest that this process, developed through the particular methodology, conceptual framework and setting of this research, represents a new insight into the practice of narrative construction of Christian self-identity.

Any research project has its weaknesses and this one is no exception. I am very aware first of all that my sample of research actors is small, and also that the university setting within which they work may create a particular outlook and approach to faith. I was dependent on volunteers as interviewees and my narrative method was detailed and time-consuming so I had little choice in these matters. However, I have argued (following Knight, 2002, p.125) that small samples can yield plausible results and that my findings cohere with much of the literature on self-identity construction. Ideally too I would have liked to have returned to my research actors for a second round of story telling which would have added another layer of interpretation on top of their original stories. Unfortunately limitations on the time that my research actors could give to the project made this impossible. As researcher I am also aware of my own role in the research process – my known status as lay chaplain in the university and my interaction with and possible influence on the research actors in the telling of their work/faith stories. I have tried however to minimise these influences and weaknesses through the use of two different narrative research methods which have analysed the research stories in different ways. The analysis of the two methods has been brought together so that the findings are cross-checked. The theological study of St Augustine's work has also helped me to stand back from the stories and take a more objective view. These two actions have ensured, as far as possible, the reliability of the research results.

I suggest that the use of the *Confessions* and other Augustinian material has enriched the thesis and provided a means for viewing contemporary Christian workplace narratives through a fresh lens. In particular I feel that the conceptual framework, derived in great part from Augustine's work, has held the entire thesis together and provided theoretical depth to the analysis. If there is a weakness in the use of this framework I would suggest that it is in the neatness with which it draws together the disparate stories of my research actors. This is one of the hazards of using a narrative research methodology in a doctoral research process. I

have already stated that the narrative researcher is always torn between presenting the individual character of her actors' stories and the necessity of producing a theoretical research text. The conceptual framework has allowed me to hold things together but hopefully not too tightly. I would argue too that the use of RS Thomas' poetry adds another dimension to the thesis, offering a contemporary external reflective voice to the text. Thomas's words also prevent me, as researcher, from making over-neat theoretical conclusions about the stories of real people.

When human stories are being compared it is easy to forget that the story tellers come from very different cultures and backgrounds. This research raises the question of whether the story of Augustine (cAD400) can be analysed by the same criteria that I have used to analyse my research actors' stories (cAD2010). Augustine certainly saw his story as a representative example of self-identity transformation and sanctification through the Christian faith. However, it cannot be denied that the culture of the fading Roman Empire in North Africa held a very different view of the value of individual human life and experience to our contemporary post-Enlightenment view. Our own sense of individuality and freedom of self-expression is a product of our own age and it is a real challenge to put ourselves into the mindset of 4th century people. I have noted too that Augustine as Bishop in the Catholic Church and my research actors as lay Christians in a contemporary workplace are poles apart. In spite of this though, Augustine's *Confessions* speak to this research and to our generation as they have spoken to every other Christian generation down the centuries since they were written. I have mentioned already how his autobiographical writing influences the development of Western literature and the novel where the inner moral life of the story's characters provides plot and resolution. Augustine's self-awareness and his willingness to interpret his own experience as God's action in his life are also critical in the development of Reformation Christian theology in Europe with its understanding of the importance of the individual in his or her own relationship with God, and this concept can be seen as

foundational in the work of Freud and the rise of psychoanalysis. Even contemporary “confessional” stories in our media can be seen as growing from these roots. I suggest therefore that there are real points of contact between the account of Augustine’s experience and those of my research actors. In particular Augustine’s experience of living on the cusp of cultural change, between a secular pluralistic society and a minority Christian community, chimes with the experience of my workplace research actors. I recognise however that there is a cultural divide between his world and ours and I have tried to reflect that in my analysis, but I am aware that Augustine’s own approachable style tends to disguise the divide, and make comparison more straightforward than perhaps it should be. I am reassured however by the fact that I am by no means the first scholar to use Augustine’s words in cross-century comparisons.

My thesis title asks a question about the possible link between neo-platonic dualism and postmodern fragmentation. The answer to this question forms a secondary conclusion in this research. I assumed at first in my hypothesis that Augustine’s story would show neo-platonic dualism and that my contemporary research actors’ stories would show postmodern fragmentation in the expression of their self-identities. My research has found however that this assumption is too limited. It seems that Augustine shows fragmentation of self-identity as well as a tendency towards neo-platonic dualism. In Book X for example he castigates himself for a multitude of different desires which pull him apart as he seeks to know himself completely before God. Likewise my research actors show a dualism as well as fragmentation in their identities. There persists in their stories a sense of inner (faith) and outer (workplace) self-identities - sometimes running along concurrently but nevertheless separated. I conclude therefore that although this dualistic thinking is not understood as “neo-platonic”, it still plays a powerful role in the work/faith self-understanding. It appears too from Augustine’s account that the sense of fragmentation of self-identity is not only a postmodern phenomenon.

However, the research findings make no claims for generalisability across all Christian believers in every workplace. I would only claim that this thesis represents an honest attempt to answer the research questions as they apply to this sample of people. With Augustine's help I have drawn conclusions from my findings which echo conclusions drawn by other scholars, many quoted in this work. The contribution to knowledge which this thesis makes is to understanding of the practice of narrative construction of Christian self-identity. Here a sample of workplace Christian stories analysed through a particular methodology, show a distinctive process of narrative construction of deep self-identity, and surprisingly, that deep self-identity develops within and in spite of experience of division and fragmentation of self-identity.

A final question concerns the way that the findings of this research may be translated into the praxis of lay Christian self-identity building in contemporary workplace settings. I have suggested that the lay Christian in the workplace needs to be able to use tools of interpretation in order to bridge the divide between faith and work experience, and that one of these tools is the opportunity to share one's personal work/faith narrative in a reflective space. The lay Christian theology created in such encounters is valuable both to individuals and to their church communities. Workplace stories reflect living traditions being tested and extended in the real world. This is twenty first century incarnational Christianity being lived, and such voices need to be heard.

If the workplace experience of lay Christians was valued more highly by the churches then perhaps the development of Christian workplace spiritualities would also be encouraged. Such interpretative spiritualities, as this research has shown, can give workplace Christians a sense of more holistic self-identity and vocational distinctiveness. An appreciation of God's action in every relationship and environment might enable the voicing of a fresh confession of Christian faith in a language that can be shared between believers and non-believers. If God's word is to be

heard then it needs to be spoken in a contemporary and relevant language.

The role of the churches in supporting lay Christians in the contemporary workplace has only been touched on obliquely in this research project. My research actors have sometimes critiqued their church communities and in some cases have found it unnecessary to belong to a particular community in order to sustain their Christian faith and self-identity, although all have grounded their stories in a strong Christian narrative. There is further work to do in the field of practical theology to test whether the process of deep self-identity development suggested in this thesis can be developed into a reflective learning tool for Christian development in church or chaplaincy. This research tends to suggest that the key role for the churches is to “hold the story” of Jesus Christ in order that Christians may be nurtured in a strong Christian narrative. Without this grounding the interpretative process of living the faith in the world cannot take place.

A virtue and a limitation of this project has been its concentration on a small sample of lay Christians in a very particular environment. Further research would be necessary to determine whether this pattern of deep self-identity development holds true over a wider sample of believers, and whether similar development occurs in non-believers.

My personal journey over the six years of this research project has reflected the journey portrayed in the research findings. The privilege of spending time listening to the stories of other lay Christians in my workplace and then, analysing and interpreting those stories in the light of Augustine's writings and the theories of self-identity construction, has enabled me to further understand my own fractured self-identity. In my own thinking I have mirrored the process of movement through fragmentation to deeper inner understanding and unity. My own Christian narrative now contains those elements of personal interpretation, finding my own words, establishing a behavioural framework for action in my workplace, and appreciating more deeply my vocation and talents. What my personal experience illustrates however most clearly, is that this is a never-ending process – not a one-off event. In this research I have captured the experience of my research actors at one point in their pilgrimage but by now they will all have moved on and developed further in their self-knowledge and God-knowledge. Faith does not stand still and in the messiness and fragmentation of the real world of work and survival, it goes on searching, hoping, for meaning and purpose. As our Christian thinking is shaped and re-shaped by our experience, so our distinctive Christian self-identity is constructed and confirmed. Each individual believer does it in his or her own way – for me, R S Thomas has the final word.

The word

*Enough that we are on our way;
never ask of us where.*

*Some of us run, some loiter;
some of us turn aside*

*to erect the Calvary
that is our signpost, arms*

*pointing in opposite directions
to bring us in the end*

*to the same place, so impossible
is it to escape love. Imperishable*

*scarecrow, recipient of our casts-off,
shame us until what is a swear-*

*word only becomes at last
the word that was in the beginning.*

(Thomas, 2004, p.195)

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Note

Quotations from Augustine's Confessions are taken from Henry Chadwick's translation, published by Oxford University Press, 1991. References give the Book number and then the Chapter number, based on late fifteenth and early sixteenth century editions.

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Appendix 1

Anglia Ruskin MPhil Research Participant Consent Form

Name of participant :

Title of project : How do lay Christians in secular employment develop their christian self-identity in the workplace?

Researcher : Diana Garfield (email address d.m.garfield@anglia.ac.uk)
(telephone 0845 196 3192)

1. I agree to take part in the above research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet which is attached to this form. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, for any reason and without prejudice.
3. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded.
4. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.
5. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.

Data Protection: I agree to the University processing personal data which I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me.

Name of participant
(print).....Signed.....Date.....

Name of witness
(print).....Signed.....Date.....

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please complete the form below and return to the main investigator named above.

Title of Project:

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY

Signed: _____

Date:

Section A : The Research Project

“How do lay Christians in secular employment develop their christian self-identity in the workplace?” - Diana Garfield.

This study is an MPhil research project comprising a piece of practical theological reflection on the real life experiences of a sample of lay Christians. It will seek to record the stories of some christian working lives and identify some of the ways in which christian self-identity is developed and maintained in the workplace today.

The researcher is a professional librarian in a post-1992 university as well as an Anglican Reader and University Lay Chaplain. She has many years of pastoral experience with people in the workplace and holds an MA in Pastoral Theology.

Section B : Your participation in the Research Project

“I invite you to participate in this research as one of my interview subjects. I am trying to interview a sample of christian workers from a variety of backgrounds and church traditions. Your participation in the project would be much appreciated.

I am hopeful that the research will result in a renewed recognition by the Church of the theological and spiritual value of the working lives of Christians in this country. At the least it should enable the faith/work stories of working Christians to be heard afresh.”

Practical points to note :

1. You are under no pressure to take part in this research and can withdraw from it at any time.
2. If you agree to take part your commitment will be to a one-to-one interview (no longer than 2 hours) with the researcher at which you will be asked to tell your working-life story and reflect on how your faith has shaped that story.
3. Your story will be tape-recorded and transcribed, and the researcher may contact you once to fill out details in the story after the interview.
4. Tape-recordings and transcripts will be held securely by the researcher.
5. The transcript will be analysed by the researcher after the interview and compared and contrasted with other stories to identify recurring themes and phenomena.
6. At all stages in the analysis and writing-up of the research you will remain anonymous. Any quotations from your interview will be given under a pseudonym.

Appendix 2

Example of analysis using Agar and Hobbs' (1982) method

Interview 2 26/10/06 (section)

Looking for local, global and themal coherence to identify claimed self-identity (See Methodology Chapter pp. 101-103)

1.I	I'd like you to tell me the story of your life as a Christian in the workplace, especially any events and experiences that have been important for you in that story .. start wherever you like..	
2.J	Well its interesting because just as you were introducing it to me I suddenly thought that my earliest working experience certainly in education was before I even went to university – between school and university – for just a term I taught in a secondary school out in Kenya, and that was a great experience.	Global
3	The school was Christian led by Christian missionaries from different countries and different missionary societies from the one with which I was doing a kind of young person's gap period and so it was wonderful to work with Christians from America , New Zealand	Local
4	As well as from the UK and get a little feel for the missionary field at that time and we are talking about 1967	Local
5	So what age were you then?	
6	19, 18..	Local
7	But its funny there was one particular incident, from a christian perspective and the working perspective I particularly remember – I was having trouble with one of my classes – they were being very very difficult in deed – and I was getting increasingly ...angry- I suppose the word I would use to describe it	Global
8	But I think , I can only say that the Spirit led me to stand back and consider carefully and I realized that if I was going to make any progress with them I needed to ..	Global
9confess my anger, my lack of love for them..as young people	Global
10	And after I'd knelt at my bed and done that, the situation changed , so that was quite a lovely experience quite early in my Christian life...	Global
11	And it was a wonderful few months . I hugely	Local

	enjoyed the teaching	
12	What were you teaching?	
13	Well I was teaching English to the equivalent of second year secondary...	Local
14	But I was also the master in charge of games , athletics..	Local
15	And of course in Kenya one had some pretty red hot athletes in areas that I wasn't personally...	Local
16	I can think of pole vaulters, I can think of.	Local
17	I can remember his name to this day – Jorum- who was actually a Samburan prince..Sambura in the North of Kenya	Local
18	And to watch him throw the javelin was frightening ..because the speed and the power and the distance... because effectively that's what they did...	Local
19	From one end of the sports pitch to the other – it was terrifying – and the runners and so on – it was just an amazing experience...	Local
20	And lovely I think also to be doing it in a Christian context – a christian led school-	Global
21	Though not all the staff were Christians and not all the students were Christians..	Global
122	And then you came back to England after that year?	
23	Well the I – it wasn't even a year –it was from April to August- it took time to get a work permit	Local
24	And I was doing the old Oxbridge entrance thing ..	Global
25	Which actually means you stay til the December after your A levels	Local
26	It was a very intense experience	Global
27	Then I came back – I did my degree at Durham which was wonderful and I did my PGCE at Cambridge which was ... interesting...	Global
28	And obviously in both places I met people who have been lifelong friends...	Local
29	And starting teaching and in a sense my life moved into top gear at that point	Global
30	And seems to have stayed the same ever since ..(laughter) – in the fast lane for 35 years..	Global
31	Partly because...I think you are aware – I have 6 children – we have our own little school..	Global
32	And so the work-life balance thing has always been something to be worked at..	Global
33	I won't say a tension exactly but a reality that has to stay balanced day by day , year by year...	Global (identity discovery)
34	And of course it does mean there are some	Global

	things you can't do and don't do , because if you pursued those interests – the balance would go..	
135	Because of your family?	
36	Because of my family ..like for instance .. beyond my degree I've done no further higher study , because you just can't do that and give a wife and six children the attention they deserve as it were ...(silence)	Global
37	And that also means that in some ways its difficult for me to be explicit about my Christian experience.. I've not reflected on it as much as I should have done probably..	Global
38	I started off teaching – I spent 3 years teaching at a grammar school in Lincolnshire..that was different – surprisingly different to me..	Global
39	I went through the independent school system and I hadn't realized how different background and ethos of a grammar school in Lincolnshire would be from my own personal educational experience as it were – there was a lot to learn..	Global (identity discovery)
40	The teaching, the academic teaching is fine , it's the making relationships with the boys, in this case – it was just boys ..	Global
41	Actually no .. I took one or two girls – in the sixth form – I taught one or two girls from the High school...Russian	Local
	Um.....and of course our first 2 children were born and it was just a whirl....	Global
42	But at that point ... after 3 years .. I felt that I wanted to try something else...	Global
43	There was a sense in which I couldn't see myself as a classroom teacher in one school for the rest of my life...	Global
44	It was quite a strong feeling...	Global
45	And ~I think that I've already touched on it ..I think its possible that if my first job had been in a school like the one I attended – then I might well have stayed there as Mr Chips – for the rest of my life...	Global (identity discovery)
46	I did my teaching practice at L College in Sussex ...I have a feeling that if there had been a job for me there I might still be there today..	Local
47	But anyway ..I had come into if you like the State education system which was different to the one I had been brought up in...	Local
48	And anyway I applied for a number of things and was blessed to get a secondment to B G College in Lincoln- which is a well known church college – it was well known at the time and continues to be well known today..	Global

49	And again that was a very interesting year – and its difficult to see any specific Christian experience in that as I look back on it at the moment – something may come back to me...	Local
150	It's a Christian college ?	
51	It's a Christian college – well a church college – but yes, already ... I wouldn't have said that the church or Christian ethos actually was tremendously strong looking back on it..	Local
52	Although I'm sure it is in others .. I mean a new principal had arrived at the time and he was a real live wire educationally – he was a very nice chap...	Local
53	The other thing is ...sorry I haven't explained myself entirely ...I actually was seconded to an educational television consortium..which included B G college , another college at a place called S R on the A1 and the authority itself and the idea was that we made video programmes for schools and for teacher education	Global
54	That's how I got into the media side of things..	Global
55	And so actually we travelled around – we had a big van , an outside broadcast van, we used to turn up at a school and unload all these cameras which were massive and put them into classrooms and film and then bring it back and edit it..	Local
56	And so in a sense B G was the base – I was all over the place for the year..	Local
57	So apart from the Lord keeping me safe in traveling backwards and forwards in Lincolnshire, Nottingham shire , Leicestershire, Derbyshire and anywhere else we went to film..	Local
58	And interestingly my second child D was born just before that year began and theres a sense in which I missed – I didn't see as much of him in that first year of life as I would have liked to because I was seldom home before seven...	Global
59	So, I'm not really conscious of any particular Christian experience relating to that year.	Global
60	Then I came down to the south , in a sense back down to the south because I lived in London as a child...to Sussex	Global
61	Where I became a professional assistant – a sort of junior education officer in the East Sussex Education Dept. I was actually working in youth adult and community rather than in schools and colleges most of the time, which was very interesting professionally.	Global
62	And opened my eyes to ... other further education, non –statutory, provision made by local authorities so that was very interesting	Local

	professionally..	
63	One of the reasons why it had caught my eye, the job, was because it led me to move closer to my grandmother ... my grandfather had died over Xmas, before I got the job, the two seemed to coincide and so I thought I'll try for that one and I got it...	Global
64	So we settled in Sussex...	Global
65	As it turned out for 74-78 , we moved here in 79, for 3 or 4 years ...but we were very happy indeed... we had a lovely house in Uckfield in the Sussex countryside..	Global
66	Again very intense – the change of career as it were – becoming an administrator...	Global
67	Um...I'm not sure how this ties in to work exactly – but spiritually it was quite a challenging time..	Global
68	Because now we had – how many children..? (laughter)..J, D , T was born about 6 months after we arrived in Sussex so we had 3 – and actually J was born towards the end of our time there -	Global
69	So for instance going to church even was very difficult..we tended to go alternate Sundays – one would look after the children and one would go to church..	Global
70	And the only church we could really go to ..was how can I put it .. the teaching was not.....	Global
71	It wasn't as sound or biblically focused as one would hope – one wasn't able to feed on that in the way that one hopes to as part of the whole experience of church..	Global
72	But it was interesting..but what I discovered as the months went on was that the two lessons, the two bible readings were for me the sort of spiritual heart of the service – because you can't do anything with those – you know someone stands up and they read scripture and that powerfully reinforced to me the sense of the centrality and importance of scripture..	Global (identity discovery)
73	That even if the interpretation that follows later on in the service is problematic or unsound your mind can go back to..	Global
174	You've got the original?	
75	You've got the original..yes..	Local
76	And this sense of still being in the fast lane..with young children – driving into Lewes each day..very intense working environment, very interesting...	Global
77	But anyway again – it became fairly clear to me after ..	Local
78	I can't think if there were any Christians I was aware of in County Hall – yes, just one that I	Global

	particularly – yes – one of the county advisers in FE was a Christian – we used to have some fellowship together at work..	
79	And I'm not saying it was nasty ..it was a a very nice – they were good people..the CEO was of the old school – very good man, professional and my colleagues were great in various ways ..	Global
80	But I had a lovely boss who was a woman who interestingly went on to become chairman of what is today the TTA – not the Chief executive but the chair ..	Local
81	So I learnt a huge amount professionally there and I'll come back in a minute ..to how some of what I learnt there fed back into Christian service..	Global
82	I'm blethering on now..so I've talked about church ...umm.	Local
83	But yes.. I became – the thing was – I didn't want to be an administrator for the rest of my life ..	Global (identity discovery)
84	Its fascinating just to sit here and chat to you about this...(laughter)	Local
185	Did you feel you were a teacher then?	
86	I felt I wasn't an administrator ultimately– by nature – I think I got into it and made a passable fist at it ..and perhaps I had some gifts and traits that most administrators don't have – so I added although at a very junior level to the mix..	Global
87	And certainly I .. I did a bit of media teaching in adult education and I certainly enjoyed meeting those actively engaged in delivering education in various ways out and about and the residential centres was one of the things I was responsible for and I felt that was worthwhile and interesting provision to continue and support – we had 3 residential centres..	Local
88	Um but at the end of the day I knew that I couldn't see myself applying to become a Assistant Education Officer, a senior education officer, a deputy chief education officer , all that stuff..the thought was terrifying so I started to.. and I'd so enjoyed the secondment in Lincolnshire in media.	Global (identity discovery)
89	That I started looking for jobs that brought all that together..	Global
90	And...??. Recruited me at the C Institute of HE	
91	Again in terms of work life balance this was an interesting one .. F had had quite a bad time with our third child and the interview , the call to interview, came in October 78 and I decided	Global

	mentally – I hadn't told anybody – that whether or not I went to the interview depended on how well the birth of young J who was about to be born , went – and in fact the birth went very well and F was – recovered well, you kind of know after 24 hours – well actually it was 4 days – on the fourth day I needed to come to this interview – so I was confident – she was in hospital still and her mother was looking after the children -	
92	So I was confident I could come up for the interview and to cut a long story short , I was offered a lectureship here	Local
193	So it was a lectureship in ?	
94	In learning resources	Local
195	So was that in C or B?	
96	Well it was at both campuses but I was based at B – I chose B as my base..	Local
97	And .. then I came up here and we then entered another quite tricky patch..	Global
98	Because what I hadn't had the time to do..all I could do was come up the night before stay in a hotel, go and do the interviews – 2 site interviews started here and then went down to B and finished up at M with Dr C and then on the train and the straight back home again – so what I hadn't had a chance to do was look at the estate agents and the house prices in this area..so I didn't discover for another month or so that house prices in this part of Essex were higher than Uckfield in Sussex.	Local
99	..looking back on it .. it was a bit silly because of course in London everything is governed by how fast you can get in to the main railways stations and Uckfield it took an hour and 20 minutes but of course its such a lovely place to live I couldn't see how anyone would pay more for a house in Essex...(laughter)	Local
100	The upshot of that was that I was traveling backwards and forwards week after week, month after month between Essex and Sussex and this is much more personal....	Global
101	Its about the interface?	Local
102	And that was very difficult...	Global
1103	So you were away during the week were you?	
104	Going back weekends .. I don't know whether you ever met DO, head of Learning resources, a lovely man ... he said to me You don't need to come in til mid-morning Monday and I want you out of the place by 1pm on Friday , which was lovely...and of course I still did the 37 / 40hours etc.	Local
105	But it was a nightmare from the point of view	Global

	of my family...	(identity discovery)
106	The work was very engaging..and it was complete virgin territory....I had experiences, skills, relevant to that but..it was virgin territory..	Global
107	The weekends at home were very difficult because you kind of build up and look forward to it..	Global
108	But you are so stressed by the time you finally get out of the car, having driven through the single tunnel as it was then, past Tunbridge Wells...and arriving home shattered about 5pm	Local
109	And children jumping all over you ,and a tired wife..	Local
110	I think spiritually ..what one could say , I got good guidance in carrying one through a period like that safely..	Global
111	I thought this is a nightmare..we're never going to find a decent house in Essex, perhaps I'd better slug it out for 18 months and after that begin to apply for another job somewhere else and also to look for other jobs back in Sussex..	Global
112	And so I was scouring the TES all the time whilst throwing myself into the job here – it was a basically a stressing time..	Local
113	I thought I could go on doing this for a time .. in those days the academic contract the terms were quite good – I worked out in the first 6 months I'd only had to do 16 weeks work..	Local
114	I'm being very honest with you here!!	Local
115	There was a 4 week Xmas holiday and a 4 week Easter holiday and then the summer holidays started in the middle of June – so by the end of July you were well into the summer holiday which then went on til the third week in September so between Jan and September I'd done 2 8 week terms so I kidded myself I could go on doing this...	Local
116	And I think now looking back on it luckily..,on my way back at the end of the summer holidays – I remember the day well ...it was a beautiful september day...and I drove up from Uckfield	Local
117	The accelerator cable broke on the car..and I called the AA and got going again and that made me think very seriously about whether in practice I could go on in this way..	Global (identity discovery)
118	So I returned again to looking for houses and a house came up just opposite college , it came back on to the market	Global
119	And although it took every penny of savings and every penny I was allowed to borrow ..we	Local

	managed to buy that house and the family moved in in March 79	
120	And began to settle into Essex. And then I think what I would say...	Global
121	Is that I've been very slow developer spiritually .. although in a sense giving my life to Christ at the age of 10...I think its perhaps a common experience of children born to Christian families ... but anyway...	Global (identity discovery)
122	The great thing about coming and settling finally in Essex was that we found a church and started to become involved in the life of a church..	Global
123	And all of a sudden the work life balance was back properly in balance to the point where I could come home for lunch...	Global (identity discovery)
124	I still worked I think relatively long hours – I didn't need to get in til shortly before 9...nobody else was in...indeed the timetable was arranged around the students who tended to be mature and wanted to drop their children at school... but I'd stay til 6pmit was just 2 minutes walk across the road..	Local
125	And so for 22 years.... I had this great blessing of being able to hold everything together..my family, my work..and my very slow spiritual development..	Global (identity discovery)

Appendix 3

Example of analysis using Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) method

Interview 2 – Clandinin and Connelly –analysing material within the 3 dimensional narrative inquiry space (see Methodology Chapter pp. 103-105).

Time / continuity	Place/ situation	Personal and social experience / interaction	To what extent is this an issue in shaping identity within the story?
Pre-18/schooldays	Independent school	<p>I went through the ind school system 39 I think its possible that if my first job had been in a school like the one I attended then I might well have stayed there as Mr Chips for the rest of my life..45</p> <p>I've been a very slow developer spiritually. ...Although in a sense giving my life to Christ at the age of 10 . I think its perhaps a common experience of children born to Christian families 121</p>	<p>Establishment, Anglican identity</p> <p>Identity challenged by workplace experience</p> <p>Personal faith development slower than external appearances</p>

18 years old 1967	Kenyan secondary school – temporary teacher /placement	<p>A great experience 2 Wonderful to work with christians from America , NZ 3 Get a little feel for the missionary field at that time 4 I was having trouble with one of my classes 7 I was getting increasingly angry 7 Spirit led me to stand back 8 Confess my anger, my lack of love for them 9 The situation changed , so that was quite a lovely experience 10</p>	<p>Looking back – establishment view?</p> <p>Choice of words shows background / ethos of upbringing</p> <p>Identity challenged by behaviour of class</p> <p>Making sense of anger through falling back on faith/tradition</p> <p>Development of own Christian identity within the tradition</p>
18-22 University life	Degree at Durham PGCE at Cambridge	<p>Durham – wonderful 27</p> <p>Cambridge – interesting 27 Obviously in both places I met people who have been lifelong friends 28</p> <p>I chose my degree out of personal interest really . I did have a place to read Classics at Cambridge but I didn't want to .. most people think it's a bit odd to turn down a place at Cambridge 138</p> <p>But I went through quite a difficult patch</p>	<p>Durham outshines Cambridge!</p> <p>Assertion of independence – awareness of establishment world view?</p>

		<p>emotionally 140</p> <p>Paul Tournier's work – a great emphasis on the need to forgive those who have wronged you 141</p> <p>Intellectually and emotionally I saw that as being part of the practical expression of Christian faith.. 142</p> <p>I loved Durham to bits and it was just wonderful and it was a great privilege to get 10 further years there with my own children .. a really huge blessing 143</p>	<p>Forgiveness important part of Xtian identity – see also Kenyan experience.</p> <p>Place of finding self and going back to that security again ?</p>
<p>20-30</p> <p>Early teaching career</p> <p>Early family life</p>	<p>Lincolnshire Grammar school (3 years)</p>	<p>That was different .. surprisingly different to me ...38</p> <p>There was a lot to learn 39 it's the making relationships with the boys..40</p> <p>Started teaching and in a sense my life moved into top gear at that point ..29</p> <p>I have 6 children – we have our own little school..31 ... our first 2 children were born 41</p> <p>Work-life balance thing has always been something t be worked at 32</p>	<p>Different ethos from own upbringing and schooling – challenge to identity and struggle to relate to boys</p> <p>Top gear/fast lane theme throughout story</p> <p>Pressure of family</p> <p>“in some ways its difficult for me to be explicit about my Xtian experience – I’ve not reflected on it as much as I should have done probably” 37</p>

	Church college (1 year)	<p>My life has been in the fast lane for me – in terms of my nature – I’ve been pushed along faster than I would have chosen to go 151</p> <p>There is no way I could fulfil my responsibilities and take weeks for thinking great thoughts – it’s not an option and I’m too tired once I’ve come home 154</p> <p>A very interesting year and it’s difficult to see any specific Xtian experience in that as I look back...49</p> <p>Making video programmes for schools – That’s how I got into the media side of things 54</p> <p>Apart from the Lord keeping me safe in travellingI’m not really conscious of any particular Xtian experience relating to that year. 59</p>	<p>Later reinforcement of this theme – slight sense of resentment?</p> <p>Tension between outer Xtian identity and inner reality?</p> <p>Media interest and expertise is at the heart of professional identity.</p> <p>Protection of faith?</p>
30-35	Sussex	<p>Then I came down to the south.. in a sense back down to the south because I lived in London as a child..60</p> <p>So we settled in Sussex .. we were very happy indeed..65</p> <p>It led me to move closer to my</p>	Sense of homecoming

	Education dept education officer	<p>grandmother.. my grandfather had died over Xmas... the two seemed to coincide 63</p> <p>Very interesting professionally 62 - one of the county advisers in FE was a Xtian – we used to have some fellowship together at work</p>	<p>Family belonging</p> <p>A sign that this was a right move?</p> <p>Developing as a professional? Work /faith connection -</p>
	Church attendance	<p>Spiritually it was quite a challenging time 67</p> <p>The only church we could really go to ...the teaching .. wasn't as sound or biblically focused as one would hope ..71</p> <p>What I discovered ..was that the two bible readings were for me the sort of spiritual heart of the service...72</p> <p>At the end of the day I knew I couldn't see myself applying to become an Asst Educ officer...the thought was terrifying – and I'd so enjoyed the secondment in Lincolnshire in media... I started looking for jobs that brought all that together.89</p>	<p>Expectations of church going – to feed the rest of life...?</p> <p>Seeking job satisfaction – expecting fulfilment through work? Vocational ideas?</p>

1978-79	Transition between Sussex and Essex	<p>Story of interview and decision to take job in Essex. House prices difference. Travelling between Sussex and Essex weekends .. A nightmare from the point of view of my family 105 The work was very engaging and it was complete virgin territory 106</p> <p>I think spiritually .. I got good guidance in carrying one through a period like that safely..110</p> <p>Car breakdown – made me think very seriously about whether in practice I could go on in this way 117</p> <p>A house came up just opposite college....we managed to buy that house.. moved in in March 1979. 119</p>	<p>Tension between family needs and own needs for fulfilment</p> <p>Protection of faith (see 59)</p> <p>A sign?</p> <p>Building to crescendo in story!</p>
1979 – 2001 22 years	Brentwood	<p>And began to settle in Essex 120</p> <p>I've been a very slow developer spiritually ... although in a sense giving my life to Christ at the age of 10 .. I think its</p>	Completion of story

		<p>perhaps a common experience of children born to Xtian families .. 121</p> <p>We found a church and started to become involved in the life of a church 122</p> <p>And all of a sudden the work life balance was back properly in balance...123</p> <p>And so for 22 years I had this great blessing of being able to hold everything together ..my family, my work and my very slow spiritual development...125</p>	Fulfilment
Some difficult times ...1983	Re-organisation at work	<p>Its just about losing one's independence. 131</p> <p>For various reasons I was quite upset ...</p> <p>Going back to the Kenyan experience .. the Spirit convicted me .. drove me to my knees ..and told me I needed to forgive those who I felt were wronging me . (Do you remember referring back to the Kenyan experience at the time?) 135</p>	The process of telling the story makes connections in his faith experience and understood Xtian self-identity.

		<p>No .. I'm only putting the 2 together now really.. (emotion) 136</p> <p>Its been part of my spiritual growth rather than my professional growth that experience 149</p>	<p>Difficulties and suffering at work seen as opportunities for spiritual growth in retrospect</p>